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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON STUDENT LEARNING

by

CAROLE JONES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Junior High School Principal's Influence on Student Learning," submitted by Carole Jones in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the work that junior high school principals did to improve student learning in their schools by inquiring specifically how achievement goals were chosen, how these goals were reflected in the work of the school, and what was done to enhance goal success. Four junior high school principals were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and transcripts searched for categorical replies to each research question.

Categories selected in response to the question regarding the choosing of achievement goals revolved around the principal's vision, the school needs, the personal plan of the principal and the district priorities, and the ideas of the involved actors. Two categories arose from the data pertaining to the reflection of the achievement goals in the work of the school. These categories were working together toward the same end, and work was ongoing and consistent. The categories derived for the question on what was done to enhance goal success were building a positive school image, establishing and maintaining a positive school climate, and instructional effectiveness. Categories were not used to report the advice the principals offered to other seeking to improve student achievement in their schools.

Transcripts and data from my log book were used to find common themes. These themes were that the principals cared about the school, the principals knew and led what was happening in the school, the school revolved around a spirit of community, and their was a sense of achievement in the school.

Using these themes and my personal experiences in education, implications were developed. The implications were as follows: the principals of junior high schools should not underestimate the influence they have on the workings of the school, a team effort may result in greater school effectiveness, leadership from the school district has the potential to impact the leadership given by the principal, goals for improving student achievement can provide a focus for the work of the principal and the school, goal achievement is very rewarding and thus provides an incentive to aim for greater gains.

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Chapter One

IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Most people think that they know what principals do because of opinions formed when they were students in the school setting. However, the use of past personal experiences while a student as a basis for decisions may lead to erroneous assumptions regarding the work of principals. This thesis is about the work that successful junior high school principals do.

The first chapter gives the context of the problem, the problem statement and the specific research questions, the significance, assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study, definition of terms, and the organization of the thesis.

Context of the Problem

As society has gradually come to expect schools to be effective in teaching all children, the principalship has taken on a renewed emphasis. According to Manasse (1985), "all of the factors consistently identified as characteristic of effective schools ... are either directly or indirectly related to the effectiveness of principals" (p. 440). Therefore, principals are increasingly considered to be the key figure in the school and are expected to function with competence in many areas but especially as instructional leaders who ensure the effectiveness of the school.

The cumulative findings of research on school effectiveness are beginning to form recurring patterns. In a 1983 effective schools literature review, Purkey and Smith, from the University of Wisconsin, indicate that:

> At the moment public discourse on effective schools is dominated by literature reviews and scholarly editorials. These have captured educators' and the public's fancy by reducing a disparate literature to simple recipes for school improvement (p. 429).

Pukey and Smith (1983, p. 429) go on to state that the summary provided by Edmonds (1979a, 1979b, 1981), based on his research and that of Averch, Carroll, Donaldson, Kiesling, and Pincus (1972), Broghy and Good (1970), Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, and Wisenbaker (1979), Mayeke, Wisler, Beaton, Weinfeld, Cohen, Okada, Proshek,and Taber (1972), and Weber (1971) indicates that the effectiveness of a school is characterized by a number of interdependent factors. These are: strong administrative leadership, high expectations for student achievement, an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, an emphasis on the learning of basic skills, and frequent monitoring of student progress.

The importance of administrative leadership, frequently expressed as instructional leadership, has become a quality aimed for by principals and sought for in the principals that superintendents and school boards hire. Farley (1983, p. 24) describes instructional leaders as "creative, bold, supportive, and dedicated to the mission of the school." Yet on a day to day basis, the work of principals is varied and, according to Thoms (1986, p. 199) "characterized by brevity, fragmentation, and variety." This would suggest that within the broad framework of the principalship, principals perform a multitude of tasks

as indicated in the descriptive studies of Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) and Wolcott (1973).

According to Rutherford (1985) effective principals have a clear vision for their school, establish goals, develop a positive learning environment, monitor progress, and intervene when necessary. Principals accomplish these efforts through goal setting and planning, monitoring, evaluating, communicating, scheduling, staffing and modeling (Thoms, 1986; Dwyer, 1986). All of these functions are focused on ensuring an effective school environment to enable students to achieve academically. Therefore, despite the multitude of small tasks facing the principal on a daily basis, the effective principal is able to integrate these tasks with the goals of instructional leadership for school effectiveness.

Some researchers are only beginning to question whether instructional leadership can be presumed to be the same for all levels of schooling (Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982; Mulhauser, 1983). While many research efforts either have not made an attempt to distinguish between the levels of schooling (Dwyers, 1986) or have focused on elementary schools (Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982; Wolcott, 1973), junior high schools may show important variations due to the specialization of the teachers, and the age range of the clientele who are affected by their previous school experiences, and the developmental stages of adolescence. Mulhauser (1983, p. 60) indicates that "researchers are concerned that prescriptions for leadership drawn from research on elementary schools not be automatically assumed to apply to all schools."

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate the work of junior high school principals in their efforts to improve student achievement in their schools.

Research Questions

The specific questions addressed by the study were:

1. How were achievement goals chosen?
2. How were these goals reflected in the work of the school?
3. What was done to enhance goal success?
4. What advice would principals give to others seeking to improve the student achievement levels in their own junior high schools?

Significance of the Study

Studies of effective schools by Weber (1971), Averch et al. (1972), and Brookover et al. (1979) have identified the principal as a key component in enhancing student academic success. It is hoped that this study will increase the awareness of what junior high school principals do to enhance learning in their schools. This study should be of interest to junior high school principals and provide material for self-reflection on their own strategies and on what is done routinely.

Teachers may find the study informative, and helpful in the development of insight into and an understanding of the principal's work.

Superintendents and school boards may also find this study of interest from the aspect of increasing awareness of what some principals do in an effort to improve student achievement.

Because research at the junior high level on effective schools is limited, this study may identify similarities to and differences with research at the elementary and high school level.

The study may also provide some direction for future research on the work of junior high school principals.

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions made when doing this study were that principals were able to recall accurately what they did, and that the interviews brought forth relevant data to enable identification of actions that contributed to the success of the school.

Limitations of the Study

There were various limitations to a study of this nature. These limitations related mainly to the researcher and the respondent. Data were collected through interviews and therefore the study depended on the ability of the principal to reflect on past actions. Accuracy of the data was limited by the ability of principals to remember the details of their actions and by their awareness of the importance of the actions that may not have held relevance for them during the occurrence. When describing the work that they do, the principals may have had difficulty revealing personal activities and thoughts, and there may have been a

discrepancy between what a principal perceived to have been done and what was actually done.

Lack of inquirer interview experience was also a limitation in this study. In an effort to minimize this limitation, a pilot interview was conducted.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was concerned with the perceptions of four junior high school principals in one urban school district, and may not reflect perceptions of other junior high principals in this or other districts.

The study participants were delimited on the following bases:

- the school had a minimum of 50 students enrolled in grade 9.
- there had been an improvement in the marks of the grade 9 district exams written in 1987 when compared to the previous year.
- the present incumbent had been principal at the school for the two years prior to the study.

Definition of Terms

Junior high school

- schools that restrict their student enrollment to grades 7, 8, and 9.

Organization of the Thesis

The organization of the thesis follows the following format: chapter one identifies the research problem, chapter two focuses on the literature review, chapter three presents the methodology of the study,

chapter four deals with the categorical analysis of data, and chapter five gives the common themes arising from the data. The final chapter comprised a summary of the study and the findings, personal reflections, and implications of the research.

Summary

This chapter gave the context of the problem, the problem statement and the specific research questions to be addressed by the study. Study significance, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and definition of terms were also given. The organization of the thesis concluded the chapter. Chapter two reviews some of the abundant literature and research available on the work of principals.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

In reviewing the literature and research related to how principals improve student achievement in their schools, this chapter will consider the topics of effective schools and effective principals, the role of the principal, the achievement of an effective school, and the uniqueness of the junior high school. Then the conceptual framework of the research will be given. A summary will conclude the chapter.

Effective Schools - Effective Principals

Public concern over lack of student success at school has increased demand for school accountability in education and has led to concentrated efforts by educational researchers to determine the characteristics of schools that result in improved student learning and achievement. Effective principals are vital in this process but both effective school and effective principal research are subject to criticism.

Effective Schools

The synthesis of research conducted since 1972 indicates the factors associated with effective schooling. A review of effective school literature conducted by Purkey and Smith in 1983 states that research conducted by Weber (1971), Brookover et al. (1979), and others have noted similar findings on the factors associated with school

effectiveness. Weber (1971) used the reading achievement scores of four inner-city exemplary elementary schools, while Brookover et al. (1979) used a random sample of eight Michigan elementary schools, four of which were used in a subsequent observational study, to supplement the findings of their previous study. Cohen (1982) noted convergent findings in his accumulation of effective school research. These factors are: strong administrative leadership, high expectations for student achievement, an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, an emphasis on the learning of basic skills, and frequent monitoring of student progress. Other reviews have produced somewhat different lists; however, there is evidence of parallelism in the results.

In order to provide insight into how effective schools can bring about improvements in education, these factors must be examined in more detail. Several key leadership qualities needed to provide administrative leadership, according to an article by Renihan and Renihan (1984 p. 81), are assertiveness, instructional leadership, assumption of responsibility, high standards, personal vision, expertise, and force of character. The effective leader, suggests Achilles (1987, p. 20), is a believer, is dedicated to quality education, is committed to school improvement, and encourages staff attention to key elements of effective schools. High expectations are set for the students and staff, objectives are set that are expected to be attained, teachers agree on the basic skills to be taught and mastered, and as Achilles explained (1987, p. 21), "The things of school reinforce the idea that the school is a place where pupils learn." The work of students is monitored on a regular and continual basis, with

homework policies enforced and the work marked. All of this is done in a climate that is safe and orderly without being oppressive. "Very specific rules, regulations, and guidelines are laid down and are clearly understood by everyone," contended Renihan and Renihan (1984, p. 81).

Some of these points are illustrated in an article by Elliott (Jan. 18, 1988, p. A10) which acknowledged that students in Grande Cache, Alberta had outperformed the Edmonton students on the Grade 12 Departmental Exams. The principal of the Grande Cache school recognized that teaching in his school is focused on the required material in t' curriculum. Past diploma exams are used as guides, and tests using the same style are given by the teachers on a continual basis. The process used is highly results-oriented, ensuring that students master one thing before moving on to the next.

While some researchers are committed to the effective schools findings, others are more skeptical and readily point out the perceived faults.

Criticism of Effective Schools Research

Effective school literature does not come without criticism, a factor which is helpful in the promotion of a healthy perspective. A caution is given by Perkey and Smith (1983, p. 129) against the blanket acceptance of the effective school characteristics, and the assumption that what happens in one setting can be transplanted to another. This warning note is in agreement with the research of Berman and McLaughlin (1976) on mutual adaptation or the adaptation of an innovation to suit

the setting. The following cautions were outlined in the writings by Achilles (1987):

1. Researchers who adhere to the scientific method believe that the effective schools research has not shown the cause-and-effect relationship between what is done in schools and student achievement because most of the studies are based on case work.
2. Care must be taken in transfering results based primarily on inner-city elementary schools.
3. Most effective school efforts use standardized tests as a measure of goal achievement and are thus very narrow in focus.
4. As more schools improve, the norm may be adjusted so that half again fall below the norm.

Clark, Lotto, and Astuto (1984), in an article investigating the agreement of effective school and school improvement literature, suggest concerns similar to Archilles (1987) except that they are more detailed.

Achilles (1987, p. 31-32) provides an insightful summation of the criticism aimed at the effective schools research:

> To the degree that effective school efforts are useful, and are not dishonestly employed, they should be used as rallying points for school improvement. Some effective schools methodology does warrant criticism, and the results should be used with caution. But the effective school work has brought to principals some important assistance at a time when schools are harshly under fire. If nothing else, this work gives principals direction in terms of school functions and activities. Principals, for example, can synthesize effective school ideas and develop building-level in-service programs to focus on improved learner outcomes.

Penny Jones (1988, p. 1) makes a similiar comment which placed emphasis on the Canadian scene when noting that despite the limitations:

> There is widespread acceptance of this effective schools research by both policymakers and practitioners. Although the effective schools research may not have become quite as embedded in current educational policy and practice in Canada as it has in the U.S., evidence of its acceptance does exist in such policies as increased requirements for graduating students and province-wide final exams.

The list of factors associated with effective schooling is not, in itself, a formula for success. Renihan and Renihan (1984, p. 1) place emphasis on the interdependence of the factors and the need for exercising consistent and purposeful attention for achievement of these factors. The principal is very vital in the determination of the attention given to these factors within the school.

Effective Principals

There does not appear to be any one way for principals to behave to ensure effectiveness in all situations. However, Rutherford (1985), reporting on the findings of a five year study of leadership skills of principals started at the University of Texas in 1980, indicates that there are some distinctions between more and less effective principals. The more effective principals have a clear vision for their schools that focus on students and their needs, and use that vision to establish goals and expectations for administrators, teachers and students. They establish a school climate that will lend itself toward the achievement of these goals and expectations, continuously monitor progress, and intervene to support or correct when necessary. The exact manner used to carry out these activities depends on the personality and leadership style of the principal, and, according to Dwyer (1986, p. 28), will be

influenced by the personal beliefs and experiences of the principal, and the community, institutional, and school context.

The vision, based on the principal's values, indicates the path on which the school is going, and must be clearly stated and explained to the teachers, students, and parents (Manasse, 1982). As Greenfield (1980) found in the study of eight principals, effective principals are eager to make the school over to suit their personal image of what the school should be. This vision assists in guiding decisions made about the workings of the school. According to Farley (1983, p. 25), "this does not rule out shared decision-making with staff, parents, and students, but it does require that the principal, when necessary, be prepared to make the tough decisions alone." Vision may be what ties all of the components together to produce effectiveness because, as Thoms (1986, p. 200) states:

> Value inducing, value setting, and value fusing are the fundamental leadership tasks that FWL (Far West Laboratory's) saw being accomplished by effective principals through routine behaviors carried out within a context of vision.

Effective principals translate the vision into goals such as, "finding ways to meet the learning needs of all students, helping teachers adjust to a changing school population, and raising test scores in a specific content area," (Rutherford, 1985, p. 32). These goals are well-developed and well stated, and as Kroeze (1984, p. 1) maintained, "openly emphasize the goal of achievement." Blumberg and Greenfield (1980, p. 246) put it very well when stating that, "principals who lead seem to be highly goal oriented and have a keen sense of goal clarity." David Kroeze (1984), in a review of major studies of effective

principals, noted that effective principals direct their efforts and energies toward students and teachers, and become directly involved in setting clearly defined and measurable curricular and instructional goals that are carefully integrated into the total program.

When relating these items to the complex and often ambiguous tasks that are performed by the principal on a daily basis, Lee (1987, p. 90) appropriately suggests that, "making sense of that undifferentiated jumble of activities and determining the relation between those activites and the purpose of the larger enterprise are the keys to understanding how principals influence instructional programs and processes in their schools." Nevertheless, whether responding or initiating, the principal's actions are guided by the outcomes sought and the beliefs held about the most effective means to accomplish these ends (Lee, 1987). Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) came to similar conclusions after analysing data received from interviewing four elementary and four secondary school principals. According to their results, effective principals were, "proactive and quick to assume the initiative, and resourceful in being able to structure their roles and the demands on their time in a manner that permitted them to pursue what might be termed their personal objectives as principals," (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980, p. 201).

An environment that enhances teaching and learning is essential for goal achievement. Expected behaviors are clearly communicated and rules consistently enforced (Farley, 1983) so that teachers can teach and students can learn. Within this positive atmosphere, student progress is

continually monitored and the principal is ready and willing to provide support or corrective action when necessary.

Deal (1987), when writing on effective school principals, cautions against educators treating characteristics of effectiveness as something to be installed rather than to be developed from within. It must be remembered that schools exist to serve human needs and that the role of the principal must be examined in the light of the various organizational theories before the principal's role is significantly altered so that in the desire to improve schools we don't do the oppposite by emphasizing one aspect at the neglect of others (Deal, 1987).

As with all research, the effective principal research has been the subject of criticism.

Criticism of Effective Principal Research

While research has made significant contributions to our understanding of the leadership given by effective principals, according to Kroeze (1984) the research exhibits several methodological and conceptual problems that prevent the findings from being of practical value. The problems emphasized by Kroeze (1984) are: descriptions of the principal's instructional behavior in vague and broad terms, the failure to establish the causal relationships which link specific principal behavior to student outcomes, insufficient work on the specific factors influencing the principals instructional involvement, and the lack of recognition that everything does not flow down from the principal: the principal's leadership has a non-directional aspect.

It may be that effective school and effective principal research approaches the role of the principal from a view that is too simplistic to encompass the complexities of the role.

The Role of the Principal

The role of the principal appears to be characterized by ambiguity, multiplicity, and complexity, and has therefore been described in various ways. Morris, Crowson, Hurwitz & Porter Gehrie (1982) viewed the role of the principal from the characteristics of the work while Miklos (1983) looked at the role of the principal from the type of functions engaged in. Descriptive studies of principal behavior have been the focus of other studies (Greenfield, 1980; Wolcott, 1973).

The variety and fragmentation of the work of the principal is illustrated by the description of the workday of the principal, given by Morris et al. (1982, p. 7):

> There is a certain tumble of events, one after another, which requires the ability to move abruptly from one subject to another. The principal's day allows little rank-ordering of priorities; everything seems to blend together in an undifferentiated jumble of activities that are presumably related, however remotely, to the ongoing rhythm and purpose of the large enterprise.

Roy Mendez (1986, p. 1), a principal of a junior high school in Texas, adds credence to the description of the principal's complex and fragmented work in his account of a typical work day.

> After arriving at 7 a.m. and quickly reviewing the student activities calendar, the principal attended a two-hour budget meeting at the central office, met with Johnny's parents about the lost physical education equipment in the boys' locker room, answered numerous staff questions and telephone calls, reviewed correspondence, advised the senior prom committee, discussed building security and the alarm system with the assistant superintendent, joined the guidance counsellor to select the Elk's

Club Boy of the Month, wrote several memos to the staff, and on and on....

This example indicates that most of the principal's work involves communication. Approximately seventy-five to eightly percent of the principal's work day is spent in formal or informal encounters (Wolcott, 1973; Morris, Crowson, Hurwitz, and Porter-Gehrie, 1982). Wolcott's 1973 ethnographic study of a single elementary principal's role, indicates that during the workday the principal spends about 26% of the time in prearranged meetings or conferences, 25% of the time in deliberate but not prearranged encounters, 15% of the time in casual or chance encounters, and 9% of the time on the telephone. This leaves only about 25% on the time for activities of a solitary nature and for movement from one place to another. According to the results of research conducted from 1977 to 1980 by Morris et al. (1984, p. 57) in which data were collected by shadowing 24 Chicago principals, of the time spent with others, the secondary school principal spends about one third of the time engaged in activities with or around students.

Manasse (1985, p. 442) indicates that administrative work, drawn from Mintzberg-type studies, is characterized by:

1. A low number of self-initiated tasks.
2. Many activities of short duration.
3. Discontinuity caused by interruptions.
4. The superseding of prior plans by the needs of others in the organization.
5. Face-to-face verbal contacts with one other person.
6. Variability of tasks.
7. An extensive network of individuals and groups.
8. A hectic and unpredictable flow of work.
9. Numerous unimportant decisions and trivial agendas.
10. Few attempts at written communication.
11. Interactions predominatedly with subordinates.
12. A preference for problems and information that are specific (rather than general), concrete, solvable, and currently pressing.

These activities are similar to those of principals, according to Martin and Willower (1981, p. 86), who interviewed and conducted a twenty-five day observation of five secondary school principals from a variety of settings in a northeastern American state. Strother (1983, p. 292-3), writing on the practical application of research, indicates that principals spend their time engaged in talking, making judgements, carrying out orders from above, turning chaos into advantage, and balancing stability and change, while Crowson and Porter-Gehrie (1981, p. 49) describe the role of the principal as that of maintaining stability, keeping outside influences under control, resolving staff conflicts, and acquiring needed resources.

Miklos (1983), in an article on the role of the administrator, presents a broader view of the principal as manager, facilitator, politician, and leader; and advocates a blending of the roles, a suggestion which Rallis and Highsmith (1986) agree with, in an article questioning wheather principals can be both managers and instructional leaders. Miklos goes on to give a brief description of each of the roles and emphasizes that, "prescription about administrative roles and functions would seem to be best kept at a fairly general level to emphasize that judgement and discretion must be exercised in adapting role definitions to specific situations," (p. 273).

When elaborating on the functions of the principal, Miklos (1983) indicates that as a manager, the principal is in charge and oversees the work of the school while attending to planning, decision making, organizing, coordinating, staffing, supervising, and evaluating. The facilitative role has the principal involved in endless tasks and

problems, usually created by someone else, that require attention to keep the school going on a daily basis. Sometimes seen as the person in the middle - between the school board and the teachers, between the students and teachers, and between the parents and teachers - the principal assumes the role of the politican. The role currently receiving emphasis is that of the leader, sometimes referred to as the instructional leader, where the principal endeavors to improve the instructional aspects of the school.

A careful blending of the roles may lead to the most effective results, as an overemphasis on any one role may mean the neglect of another which could have detrimental consequences. Looking at how administrators view themselves may give insight into the principalship as it exists today and where it may be heading in the future.

In a 1986 research project conducted by Brubaker and Simon with 94 principals from North Carolina, principals were asked to identify their role as principal, teacher, general manager, professional and scientific manager, administrator and instructional leader, or curriculum leader. Seventy-one percent viewed their present leadership role as administrator and instructional leader. However, only forty-nine percent of the respondents believed that the three principals they knew best were both administrators and instructional leaders. The authors, in interpreting the results, explained that first, to admit to not being an instructional leader would risk censure from superintendents and inservice leaders, yet it is safe to say that other principals are only general managers. A second reason for the results may be that principals do not know whether they are to be leaders or managers. Thirdly, it is

more prestigious to be a leader than a manager. It may also be that respondents see a difference between themselves and other principals.

Blumberg (1987), when writing on the work of principals, advocates viewing the work of the principal as a craft rather than as an art or a science. The scientific approach to the work of the principal has had little impact on practice. Likewise, viewing the principalship as an art in which the work reflects the personal style of the administrator and the environment, "seems resonable enough except that it, too, is not very helpful if we are interested in conceptualizing an image of a school administrator that would have some relevance for someone who is one," (Blumberg, 1987, p. 40). To back up the comparison of the principal to a craftsman, Blumberg (1987) notes that both know what the final product should look like, understand the nature and idiosyncrasies of the materials to be worked with, have appropriate skills and techniques, use their own experiences and the experiences of others when learning, and apply the rules of thumb to their work.

This account may be problematic when the creative aspect of a vision is needed for principal effectiveness. It may be that the work of principals cannot be assessed in the light of a single aspect but must incorporate many.

Blumberg and Greenfield (1980), in their book The Effective Principal, seem to best reflect the current thought on the role of the principal when they state:

> How principals think of their role, and the conceptions held by others of the principalship, can be a crucial determinant of their on-the-job behavior, their frustration and satisfactions in the role, and their failure or success as principals. To be sure, principals are often expected to be all things to all people: to be

> instructional leaders; to maintain the status quo; to be a decision maker or an organizational change agent, or to fulfill some other set of expectations regarding the principalship. Most principals can point out that, to a greater or lesser degree, each of these conceptions reflects some of what they do as principals. Others, probably the exceptions, think of themselves as being dominated by one conception or another (p. 24).

This lack of agreement on the role of the principal certainly does not hinder those principal who have been found to be effective but is of little assistance to weaker principals who would like to improve and achieve effectiveness in their schools.

The Achievement of Effective Schools

While an effective school is readily recognized when one is seen, it is difficult to determine what was actually done to make them effective. The review of literature suggests that effectiveness encompasses may dimensions and is holistic; however, it also implies that principals can make a difference and are important in determining the effectiveness of a school. Sergiovanni, in his book The Principalship (1987, p. 51), maintained that:

> Principals are important! Indeed no other school position has greater potential for maintaining and improving quality schools. These assertions are bolstered by findings that emerge from research and from more informal observation of successful schools. It is clear that when schools are functioning especially well and school achievement is high, much of the credit belongs to the principal.

When attempting to understand how principals make a difference in effective schools, consideration might be given to the forces of leadership, the influences on the behavior of the principal, the principal's influence on instructionally effective schools, and the use of routine actions by the principal for instructional improvement.

Lastly, this section argues for the use of standardized tests as a measure of student achievement.

Forces of the Principal's Leaderhip Which Shape The School

The forces of the leadership of the principal are, according to Sergiovanni (1987), technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural. Technical forces place emphasis on planning, organizing, coordinating, and scheduling so that order can be maintained for the day to day workings of the school, while the human forces are concerned with the resources which emphasize human relations, interpersonal competence, and motivation as exhibited through such things as support, encouragement, and growth opportunities. Expertise in classroom and other educational constituents are the educational forces of leadership that are shown by the competence of the principal when diagnosing, supervising, evaluating, providing opportunities for staff development, and leading in curriculum development. Sergiovanni (1987, p. 55) goes on to equate the symbolic leadership force of the principal with that of providing purpose for the items of importance to the school through clarification, consensus and commitment building. The sense of purpose gives the people in the school the knowlege of what is of value and meaningful, and thus provides motivation. The ability of the leader to provide and communicate a vision of what the school should be is an important part of the symbolic force of leadership that highly successful schools have. Another leadership force that is central to the achievement of school effectiveness is the cultural force in which the principal, according to Sergiovanni (1987, p. 58), seeks

> to define, strengthen, and articulate those enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its unique identity over time. As a high priest, the principal is engaged in legacy building, and in creating, nurturing, and teaching an organizational saga that defines the school as a distinct entity with an identifiable culture.

It is interesting to note that in a 1984 article Sergiovanni described the leadership forces as being hierarchical with the cultural force occupying the top of the ladder, while in 1987 he described the leadership forces using a pentagon model with each force occupying a point on the pentagon. The base of the pentagon illustrates that the symbolic and cultural forces provide the meaning and significance for the school. Processes for conducting the work of the school are shown in the middle of the pentagon and are influenced by the technical and human leadership forces. Educational forces are located at the top of the pentagon. In other words, schools can operate with leaders who rely on the technical and human forces, but it is the interrelationship of all the forces, symbolic, cultural, technical, human, and educational, that are the ingredients of effective leadership.

While there are leadership forces that can contribute to effective schooling, there are also factors within the school, community, and organizational context that influence the behavior of the principal.

The Influences on the Principal's Behavior

Effective principals may have a vision for the school and goals that they want to implement, but there are factors that influence what can be done within the school and these must be considered if the principal is to be successful in the achievement of an effective school.

The main influencing factors are the personal beliefs and experiences of the principal and the context of the school, the community, and the organization.

The personal beliefs and experiences of the principal have a bearing on the decisions made by the principal and the activities that are pursued (Dwyer, 1984). Personal beliefs will affect the vision that the principal has for the school. For example, principals with strong democratic beliefs may desire that children be educated to become self-reliant and worthy citizens. Experience may determine the value of the assistance that a principal can offer teachers on instructional and classroom management issues. This point was implied by Murphy (1987) in an article reviewing research findings on the extent to which administrators actually act as instructional leaders and the identification of barriers that impede instructional leadership. Experience should not be confused with expertise, but frequently the two go hand in hand.

Factors within the school, such as teacher and student characteristics and school ethos, may also influence the behavior of the principal. Murphy (1987, p. 4) offers an example when indicating that:

> In the absence of strong rewards and sanctions, principals must find other ways to ensure that teachers comply with a plethora of rules and regulations. Since, as we noted earlier, many principals are not comfortable working in the areas of curriculum and instruction, they often relinquish control over these domains in order to insure teacher cooperation in other areas.

The trade-offs that may be perceived as necessary probably depend on the personal characteristics of the teachers and the principal.

District mandates and expectations are influential in determining the behavior of principals. In some cases, principals are expected by the district to give priority to their being managers rather than instructional leaders, and in other cases, while principals may be told to be instructional leaders, they are judged primarily on their ability to manage conflict and keep order (Murphy, 1987). Therefore, it seems that if districts want principals to achieve effective schools, the districts must be willing to emphasize leadership above management and political functions.

Community context influences the behaviors of principals because each community brings a unique set of problems and constraints that must be considered by the principal when making decisions about how to make the school effective (Dwyer, 1984). In order to best meet the needs of the students, the principal must be aware of community aspects that have an impact on the education of the students in the school and accept these influences as a challenge that will provide unique opportunities for the enhancement of education.

Effective principals are able to find opportunities where others see problems (Dwyer, 1984) and thus turn the behavioral influences found in personal beliefs and experiences and the school, organizational, and community contexts into advantages rather than a disadvantages. In accepting the influences on their behavior, principals are also aware of their influence on the instructional effectiveness of the school.

The Principal's Influence on Instructionally Effective Schools

The behavior of principals may be influenced by outside forces, but principals also influence the behavior of others both inside and outside of the school. Using influence, the principal shapes community expectations and builds the image of the school through educational and noneducational factors (Morris, Crowson, Hurwitz, & Porter-Gehrie, 1982). Duke (1986) in a discussion of literature on leadership inferred that the relationship between the principal and teachers was reciprocal.

Jones (1988), an assistant superintendent in British Columbia, conducted research involving the completion of questionnaires by 892 secondary school teachers from 27 British Columbia school districts with a variety of socio-economic settings in an attempt to identify the behaviors of principals that are linked to student achievement. The findings contradict the effective school research which suggests that principals can play an important role in improving student achievement and that there are certain behaviors which should be engaged in by principals, regardless of school setting. Jones argues that her findings may differ because secondary schools, in contrast with elementary schools, have a broader curriculum and encompass a wider array of goals. Also, the principal cannot be expected to have expertise in all secondary school subjects, and the departmental organization encourages teachers to interact with each other rather that with the principal. Therefore, by focusing on departmental organization, and in particular the expertise and energies of the department head, the secondary

principal may best be able to influence curriculum and instruction (Jones, 1988).

Some interesting contrasts were shown by High and Archilles (1986a), who, using a scientific approach to research, sought to determine if there was a difference between the influence-gaining behaviors of principals of varying levels of instructional effectiveness. The influence-gaining behaviors of nineteen elementary and junior high school principals were judged as referent, expert, rewarder, coercer, legitimate authority,and involver. The conclusions reached by High and Archilles (1986a, p. 117) were as follows:

1. Principals of both groups of schools were quite aware of their leadership/influence-gaining behaviors and were able to describe and classify these behaviors.
2. Principals of high achieving schools provided more extensive leadership because they exhibited six of seven behaviors to a significantly higher degree than did the principals of other schools.
3. Principals should develop expertise in school-related matters which teachers value. (Principal as expert.)
4. Principals with more "expertness" exchange this expertness to influence teachers to improve instructional efforts. This seems to result in increased pupil achievement.
5. Norm setting is an important source of influence for principals with teachers.
6. Though cause and effect relationships are not contended, increased principal leadership seems to contribute to higher-achieving schools.
7. Contrary to some current thought, principals do have considerable potential to provide leadership for school improvement.

Thus, it seems that research on the principal's ability to influence the instructional effectiveness of a school are inconsistent and may continue to be so due to the complexity of the task. A somewhat different approach is taken by looking at the routine actions of principals that are directed toward instructional effectiveness.

The Use of Routine Actions by the Principal For Instructional Improvement

The principal's work is characterized by complexity, fragmentation, and brief encounters, and thus a binding force must be evident for the work to be focused and directed toward the achievement of goals and for effectiveness to result from the leadership. Vision may be the key to the provision of this binding force.

Vision, according to Peterson (1986, p. 87), is "the beliefs concerning what the ideal state of the organization is or what ought to be achieved" and "guides the ways managers spend their time, the way they distribute resources, and the ways they approach problem-solving in their role." A clear set of values and beliefs about the items that are of importance assists principals in setting priorities. The explicit relationship between the vision and the daily work of the principal is not clear (Peterson, 1986), but Manasse (1986) notes that vision helps shape the principal's behavior. A principal with vision may have a clearer conception of what the school should be, and this may be translated into action. The principal's vision (Manasse, 1986) provides the direction for the school and out of the vision evolve strategies for leading the school in that direction. According to Manasse (1986, p. 154):

> Leadership involves the infusion of routine activities with meaning and vision. For leaders, the activities of scheduling and allocating resources, communicating with staff and students, managing the safety and physical enviòæøíïøt of a school, evaluating staff, etc., are used, not simply to solve the immediate problems or to accomplish the task at hand, but also to test and communicate a set of values, priorities, and meanings that, taken together, represent the leader's vision of the organization.

Without vision, the day to day activities will be seen as separate and without purpose, and without the communication of the vision the commitment of the staff, the students, and the community may not be gained, which means that a common purpose will be lacking.

The vision leads to the establishment of goals that will enable the vision to be fulfilled. Goals are the long and short term ends that principals endeavor to achieve in their school. Procedures for goal identification, gaining support for the goals, and the communication of goals must be established. Leithwood (1986) interviewed thirty-seven secondary school principals from rural and urban school districts in an effort to develop a profile of growth in secondary school principal effectiveness. This research found that effective principals had as their goal, "to provide the best education and best experience possible for the students the school serves," (Leithwood, 1986, p. 72). This included skills and knowledge goals to be attained in a manner that enabled the students to enjoy school and to have a positive feeling of self worth. More specific goals were also given by effective principals. Emphasis was placed on goal clarification for staff, and the striving for consensus among staff about these goals being adopted as the school's goals. Leithwood (1986) elaborated that the principals in his study took steps to have school goals used as the basis for developing department goals and priorities, and used as the basis for department decision making. These goals were also communicated to students, parents, and other members of the community. Eighteen factors critical for goal achievement were identified. These factors included aspects of the classroom and school environment that directly affected the

student's experiences at school. Conditions that must prevail within the factors were outlined so as to enhance goal achievement. Among the eighteen factors listed by Leithwood (1986) were the teacher, program objectives, materials and resources, relationships among staff, and student behavior while at school. Strategies or actions taken by the principal determined the amount and the nature of the influence that the principal had on the factors. Some of the stategies used by the effective principals as outlined by Leithwood (1986) included building and maintaining interpersonal relationships, motivating staff and students, providing staff with knowledge and skills, and facilitating within school communication.

Dwyer (1986a) offered more insight into what principals do in their efforts to produce effective schools and the consequences of these actions. Using a case study approach, Dwyer extensively interviewed and observed personnel in five elementary and two junior high schools throughout the 1982-1983 school year. Schools were chosen on the basis of stable or increased student achievement scores over the five years prior to the study. Nine categories of routine principal behaviors and eight categories at which the behaviors were targeted were developed by Dwyer. Previous research by Dwyer indicated that principals directed their actions toward the school's instructional organization, climate, and external environment as they tried to shape the normal daily activities toward desired ends. However, in a later analysis of the research, Dwyer (1986a, p. 11) arrived at a more specific list of action targets, and declared that:

> The aim was to describe as richly as possible all of the variables operating within the school's social and technical systems that affected student instruction. Furthermore, we wanted to show the corresponding relationship of these variables to the management behaviors and actions of the principal.

Nine principal behaviors listed were: a) goal setting and planning, b) monitoring, c) evaluating, d) communicating, e) scheduling, allocating resources, and organizing, f) staffing, g) modeling, h) governing, and i) filling in while the target categories were listed as: a) work structure, b) staff relations, c) student relations, d) safety and order, e) plant and equipment, f) community relations, g) institutional relations, and h) institutional ethos (Dwyer, 1986a, p. 10). In commenting on the research, Dwyer (1986b, p. 69) stated:

> Combining behavior with purpose in this manner helped reveal patterns in the previously chaotic impressions of principals' actions. Sometimes these patterns were related to contextual or personal idiosyncrasies in the settings; sometimes they could be attributed to principals' carefully reasoned approaches. But in all instances, we found interesting leadership stories, where principals strived within their limits to set conditions for, or the parameters of, instruction.

Leadership results from the repetition of routine acts for purposes that are not always readily apparent, and the consequences that are not always immediate, but as Dwyer, 1986b, p. 82-83) disclosed,

> From this analysis has emerged an image of instructional leadership in which the principal's use of routine activities directly influenced and shaped the context and nature of instruction in the school as well as the climate in which teaching and learning took place.

Squires et al. (1983), in combining the research on effective classrooms with the research on effective schools, maintained that administrators and teachers can make a difference to student achievement. Student success is related to an orderly school climate

which in turn is related to the leadership. Modeling, feedback, and consensus building, reasoned Squires et al. (1983), are the leadership processes used to build and maintain a school's climate. Principals model appropriate behavior, provide feedback that supports and recognizes academic performance and behavior conducive to academic success through praise, rewards, and encouragement; and also derive a consensus about the academic focus and behavior expectations or discipline.

The research mentioned implies that principals can have an effect on instruction through their daily actions. While some of these actions may be deliberate and require a great deal of effort, other actions may come very naturally to the principal because of personal beliefs and values and thus require very little, if any, thought. But if the principal is able to have an effect on instruction, a method of measuring student achievement must be used and there is always the question about the validity of using standardized tests as a measure of student achievement.

The Use of Standardized Tests as a Measure of Student Achievement

Standardized tests provide an indicator of school outcomes, and while there may be other important school goals, achievement in mathematics and language arts are certainly considered to be basic. Squires et al. (1983, p. 7) implored that, "we use standardized tests as benchmarks for a school's success because they are more reliable, valid, and accepted than any other outcome measure." These authors (1983, p. 7-8) gave the following three reasons to back up this statement:

1. Student achievement on standardized tests generally predicts achievement for succeeding years, and gains or deficits in standardized tests tend to have a cumulative effect when viewed across a number of years.
2. Standardized tests provide a measure of educational effectiveness in the public's eyes.
3. Schools that achieve above expectations on standardized tests also tend to succeed in other important areas, such as attendance, student self concept and participation, lack of student disruption and vandalism, and low incidence of delinquent behavior in the community.

Considering the importance placed on student achievement and the research indicating that leadership is an important factor in school effectiveness, it is important when investigating the efforts of the junior high school principal in improving student achievement to look at the unique aspects of the junior high school.

The Uniqueness of the Junior High School

Junior high schools are concerned with the education of students in grade 7, 8, and 9 whose ages range from 11 years to 16 years. Dorman, Lipsitz and Verner (1985, p. 44) indicated that "making schools work for young adolescents and the adults in them is one of public education's greatest challenges." These authors also advocate that the findings of the effective schools research must be combined with knowledge about the development of the young adolescent to determine the outcomes wanted for the junior high school and work must be undertaken to improve the outcomes. Renihan (1985, p. 9) advised that:

> The most important and obvious aim of the middle school lies in the recognition of, and the specific provision for, the special characteristics of early adolescents. Toward this end, the middle school is directed at breaking the traditions established in school systems. It is concerned with providing a pupil-centered environment in which the pupil can make the transition from

childhood to adolescence as successfully as possible, without impediments from existing organizational arrangements.

A junior high school must be responsive to the needs of its students, who are undergoing physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes. The developmental needs of this age group are, according to Dorman et al. (1985, p. 46), 1) diversity, 2) self-exploration and self-definition, 3) meaningful participation in their schools and communities, 4) positive social interaction with peers and adults, 5) physical activity, 6) competence and achievement, and 7) structure and clear limits. These needs are interrelated and must be taken into account when designing environments that promote healthy learning and growth. Because of the distinct nature of this age group, a distinct type of leadership is required and special concerns develop.

During a one day seminar of principals in Saskatchewan, Renihan (1985) interviewed a group of junior high school principals and found that the concerns specific to their type of school were teacher morale, the irrelevancy of much of the junior high school curriculum, the ongoing need to recognize the special needs of junior high school students and the examination of the role of the administrator from this perspective, and the fact that some junior high schools were perceived to be too large. Others problems were mentioned of more explicit concern to the principalship. These included the problem of teacher performance, the unclear role of the principal in improving instruction, noon hour supervision of students, teacher work load, and that the school was expected to be all things to all people. In order to cope, the principal

of a junior high school probably must have an understanding of and love for the age-group involved (Renihan, 1985).

While the principalship of a junior high school may be very challenging, it may also be very rewarding as the principal integrates a personal vision, the goals to be achieved, and the normal daily tasks in an effort to lead the school toward improved student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

Previous research suggested that effective schools had strong administrative leadership and that these effective principals had a clear vision of the school that focused on student needs. This vision, according to research, was used to establish goals and expectations for administrators, teachers, and students. However, the research also suggested that the work of the principal was ambiguous, complex, varied, and fragmented. Therefore, the implications are that principals must make a conscious decision to act and engage in processes that will elicit improved student learning and that some of these processes must be a part of the routine behavior that they have designed to achieve their purposes and to fit the situation. These actions will be influenced by the personal beliefs and experiences of the principal, the teacher and student characteristics, the ethos of the school, and the community and organizational context.

The interdependence of the vision of the principal, the goals pursued by the principal, and the tasks performed by the principal formed the foundation of the conceptual framework as illustrated in Figure 1.

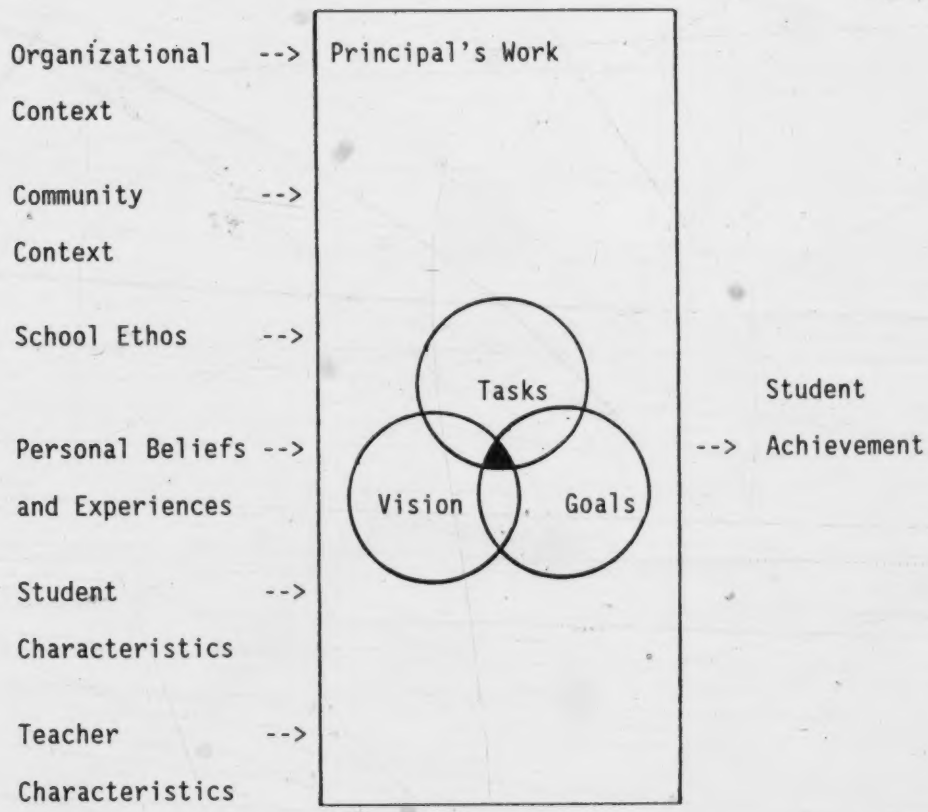

Figure 1.

The work of the principal is the integration of the vision, the tasks and the goals held by the principal. This work is affected by the forces exerted on the principal and all of these things combine to influence student achievement.

This research interpreted how four effective junior high school principals used their vision of the school to influence goal selection, how the chosen goals and the vision were reflected in the tasks performed by the principal, and what was done by the principal, when performing routine tasks that enhanced goal achievement and thus affected the vision held for the school. Lastly, advice was sought from these successful principals for others seeking to improve student achievement in their junior high schools.

Summary

The review of literature and research presented in this chapter was initiated by a focus on effective schools and effective principals research that implied a positive relationship between the work of the principal and student achievement. Criticisms were given of the effective school and principal research. The role of the principal was discussed from multiple aspects, and then the review examined the achievement of effective schools under the headings of the forces of the principal's leadership, the influences on the principal's behavior, the principal's influence on instructional effectiveness, the use of routine actions by the principal for instructional improvement, and research was presented which argued for the use of standardized tests as a measure of student achievement. The uniqueness of the junior high school was presented to reinforce aspects of the junior high school principalship which distinguish it from other school levels. To conclude the chapter, the conceptual framework of the thesis was outlined. Chapter three outlines the methodology of the study.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

Chapter three discusses the specifics of the methodology of the study. First, the design of the study is outlined including the research framework, how the principals were selected and contacted, and how the data were collected. The pilot study, data trustworthiness, and the methods used in the analysis of data are then addressed.

Study Design

Research Framework

The design of the study incorporates the interpretive paradigm in an effort to provide meaning and understanding of the work of the junior high school principal in improving learning in the school. As Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 90) state:

> The purpose of interpretive social science is to reveal the meaning of particular forms of social life by systematically articulating the subjective-meaning structures governing the ways in which typical individuals act in typical situations.

Recognizing that the contexts of the situations varied and that the realities of their situations were multiple, data were examined for the intent and the meanings that the principals gave to the activities comprising their work. It is hoped that this study will provide greater understanding of what effective principals do and why they do those things.

Selection and Contact of Respondents

In late December, I contacted senior administration within the school district for assistance in the identification of junior high schools which had shown improvement on the previous year's grade nine year end district exams. Junior high schools with more than fifty students enrolled in grade nine and those in which the same principal had been in the school throughout the improvement year and was still in the position were given consideration. From this list of schools, identification was made of those which had made the most improvement on the 1987 year end grade nine district exams. This did not mean that these schools had achieved the highest standings in the district. It just meant that their scores had improved the most.

I subsequently contacted these principals to request an appointment to explain the purpose of my study to them. An appointment was used because I felt that it was important that we meet each other and that it would be easier to outline the purpose of the study, give the ethical considerations, and answer any questions in an interview setting. Voluntary consent, subject to district approval to do the study, was given by the four principals with whom I had appointments. I agreed to arrange interview times, at their convenience.

Ethical considerations regarding the purpose of the study, the use to be made of the data, and the quarantee of confidentiality and anonymity were outlined during this interview. Principals were also informed that sources would not be identified in any direct quotation used in the final document and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, principals were told that they would have an

opportunity to review the transcripts for meaning and intent and make changes as required.

A letter was subsequently sent to each principal outlining the ideas presented at the interview.

The interviews were arranged and took place in March.

Data Collection

Data were collected using taped, semi-structured interviews scheduled at the convenience of the four junior high school principals. The general format of the semi-structured interviews was the posing of the specific research questions and the probing of answers. Principals also willingly supplied me with materials, such as handbooks, newletters, goal statements with the action plans and expected results, and information about special projects, that were referred to in the interview. Following the interviews, the tapes were transcribed and the principals were given the opportunity to check them for accuracy and intent. Changes were made as requested by the principal. Follow-up sessions were conducted as needed to clarify information or to gain additional information.

Throughout the process of writing the thesis, I documented the happenings and my analysis of the situations as they occurred in a log book.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with one junior high school principal to give both practice in conducting an interview and insight into the

type of information that might be obtained. A thorough evaluation of the pilot study was completed to prepare for the final study.

As a result of this evaluation, I realized that I was inclined to become very engrossed in the answers being given and that I needed to develop the practice of using non-directive responses to give myself think time. The presentation of the reworded response back to the repondent as a means of checking for understanding was another item that I felt was in need of improvement. In addition, I found it useful to record key words on paper as the interview progessed so that I could keep my thinking organized and to provide clues for follow-up.

This pilot study made me realize that principals would probably be willing to supply me with copies of materials, such as handbooks, that had been developed within the school and that were mentioned in the interview.

Data Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the study was enhanced by reference to credibility safeguards as referred to by Guba and Lincoln (1982). Time on site, peer debriefing, triangulation and member checks, which Guba and Lincoln (1982, p. 2447) suggested, were used to provide credibility of the research.

The interpretive study, using interviews to collect data, investigated the work that junior high school principals do to improve learning in their school. Unfortunately the interviews did not provide me with a prolonged period of time on site; however, each of the four visits to a particular school involved a wait time which provided me

with an opportunity to observe happenings in the school relating to staff relations, front office workings, how student related problems were dealt with, and on one occasion, a special event that students were involved in. Opportunities were also presented to engage in informal conversation with the principal and some staff over a cup of coffee. These occasions did provide time to identify characteristics of the context (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). Feedback from personnel in the schools was provided by these wait and coffee times plus other informal, chance encounters.

Using what Guba and Lincoln (1982, p. 247) called peer debriefing, I engaged in discussions with colleagues as a means of testing my ideas regarding the research. These discussions also allowed me to verbalize some of my anxieties. In addition, as part of this process, my advisor provided "advice about important methodological steps in the emergent design" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247).

Triangulation, as referred to by Guba and Lincoln (1982, p. 247), was used to cross-check data. Written material from hand books, goal statements and other materials collected from the schools were used to check data derived from the interviews. At times, I would check the data received in a prior interview with the principal currently being interviewed.

In order to test further for credibility, once again, the advise of Guba and Lincoln (1982,p. 247) was used regarding member checks. Interpretations were checked periodically during the interviews by presenting to the respondent a reworking of what was said. After data were analyzed, the categories were checked with the principals for their

comments on how much sense they made. Each principal agreed that they made sense.

Data Analysis

Using content analysis, transcripts were examined for answers to the research questions and for other themes that emerged from the data. The words of Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 332) guided my thinking:

> Within the naturalistic paradigm (and in updated versions of the conventional paradigms as well) data are not viewed as given by nature but as stemming from an interaction between the inquirer and the data source (human and nonhuman). Data are, so to speak, the constructions offered by or in the sources; data analysis leads to a reconstruction of those constructions.

The transcripts were coded, and applicable portions of the coded transcripts were placed in groups according to research questions. Categories were then formulated and recorded from the data for each research question. These categories were checked with the principals to verify that they made sense. Themes that arose from the data were then outlined.

I found it necessary to read the data many times so that I was extremely familiar with each transcript. Only then could I commence the data analysis.

Summary

The methodology of the study was the focus of chapter three. Within the study design, the research framework, selection and contact of respondents, and data collection were outlined. Then the pilot study,

data trustworthiness, and data analysis were described. The next chapter concentrates on the analysis of data.

Chapter Four

CATEGORICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA

First, a little background on the situations of those interviewed. The principals had been at the present school either three or four years and had a varied field of expertise, experiences, and years in the educational system. Variation was also evident in the size of the school and the socio-economic background of the students attending the schools.

Transcripts were examined, using content analysis, for answers to the four research questions relating to the work that the junior high school principals do to improve student learning. The specific research questions were: how were achievement goals chosen?, how were the goals reflected in the work of the school?, what was done to enhance goal success?, and what advice would the principal give to others seeking to improve student achievement in their junior high school?

Data relating to each research question were compliled and the categories of data were developed from the data pertaining to each question.

The meanings that the principals held for the research questions, as indicated by the data, and the resulting categories will be addressed in this chapter in order to disclose the intents and the meanings that principals had for their actions.

How Were Achievement Goals Chosen?

While all schools that I visited, and subsequently interviewed the principal, had school goals, the goals were not casually selected but were the result of a lot of effort on the part of the principal and the staff. The involvement of participants in goals selection varied. However, in each case the goals that were chosen, and in particular the goals that were emphasized, appeared to be interwoven with the vision that the principal held for the school and the school district priorities.

The Principal's Vision

The principal's vision was not always readily verbalized as I began to realize when I enquired about their vision. One principal indicated that "even right now it's difficult for me to define" and went on to indicate that "I had to go through that process a couple of years ago ... that's tough to do." Contrary to this, one principal stated the vision held of the school with ease but later on in the interview indicated that "I've never stopped to put it into words before." Nevertheless, the vision of the principals did come through as each interview progressed.

A school stressing student achievement was the common element of the vision expressed by the four principals involved in the study. "Successful", "achieve academically", "high in academics", and "importance of student achievement" were words and phrases used by the principals to indicate that one of the prime functions of the school was

to have students learn. In addition, the principal's visions stressed the climate of the school as illustrated by the expressions "happy kids and teachers", "positive relationships", "a family atmosphere", and "student deportment". The implication is that in order for students to learn, the school climate must be conducive to learning. Other researchers have termed this a safe climate or in some cases a positive learning climate. Students learn best in situations where they are happy, respected and respectful, and in which caring is exhibited.

When asked if there was a particular reason for including these items in the vision for the present school, one principal replied "No. That's basically my vision for any school, with the exception of one." He went on to explain that the exception had a high percentage of students who were close to being juvenile delinquents, and that the vision there was to get the kids to behave in a socially acceptable way and to worry about academics later. When comparing the students, this principal indicated that "The kids here have the social skills and the desire to be academically successful, so that makes life easier." Another principal indicated that the success that the students had experienced in the school "sort of confirmed that it is possible to make progress", "progress toward that kind of ideal" which "serves as an encouragement to me and a reason to keep plugging."

However, one principal felt that the tasks that were performed caused the vision to change because the tasks

> provide for the creating of the potential in any environment when you come in but as it comes closer to home and you become more familiar with all aspects of the program - staff, students, parents, curriculum, and the day to day functioning - you begin to

> realize that there is even greater potential than where your vision may lead.

The vision was something "that has unfolded" and part of it may come with "the comfort that you have with your environment" and the confidence that things are moving in the right direction. As confidence strengthened, the principal exerted more pressure and influence because of the "support of the people behind me." This confidence puts him in a position where he "can push even further." Another principal added to this line of thinking on the evolving of a vision by indicating that his vision had not changed substantially because it had not as yet been fulfilled. He added that many of the smaller issues that were needed for fulfillment were in place but that it would probably take another three years before everything was in place. "It is just like a big puzzle."

Contrasting views are evident. In some cases the vision is a constant while in other cases the vision is an unfolding process. Another way of looking at vision is that the vision is set by the principal on the basis of personal values and experiences regardless of the specific school as opposed to the vision being defined by the situation. The gradual unfolding of the vision may be more complex and difficult to verbalize as it becomes embedded in the school philosophy and mission, and the workings of the school. Where the vision starts and ends is not always easy to decipher. Or, it might be that some people are able to form a visual image more quickly than others due to the artistry of the mind. The one thing that does seem apparent is that principals are seldom, if ever, asked to express verbally the vision of the school. However, whether all principals could clearly express the

vision or not, they all definitely did have a vision which they hoped to fulfill. With the vision in the back of their minds, the inherited school situation was analyzed for needs.

The School Needs

As one principal explained, "When I moved in, it was very important for me to reevaluate all aspects of the program." He looked not only at the "academic development" but at everything from facility conditions to the custodial and secretarial staff. Every "nook and cranny" was looked at to develop a "familiarity with what was happening." "There was need for change." The school had a good standing academically "but certainly there was need to look at what we were doing on a curriculum basis." There were changes taking place in the system at that time which meant that the school would have a decreased enrolment and teachers would have to be moved. It was a "very unhappy staff." The students that we were losing might best be described as "hardcore delinquents". "I was fortunate to be able to come in when there were changes occuring." After arriving in September, the principal began to "slowly develop a game plan" over the next six months.

Another principal took more of a philosophical approach to his arrival at the school because the school already had a "good reputation." His thoughts were "I can't win." If the school continues to stay "good", then "what have I done?" and if it get worse then "it's my fault." So I decided to "keep things on an even keel, and just do what I can. I think it is better like this." Interestingly, he added "I didn't have to push that much in academics because I was more concerned with kids socially and emotionally. That's where I am at."

Using his beliefs about schooling as a basis for his initial ideas upon arriving at the school, one principal disclosed that:

> I wanted to move on a number of fronts in terms of this school. Certainly the academic growth was probably the most important to me. So many times, it seems to me, we categorized a school based on its clientele. We often settle for 'this is the best we can do', and think that we can't do any more. It seems to me that is really a myth because I do believe that young people, the students that we work with, will respond to the kinds of expectations that we set for them.

Taking these thoughts one step further, this principal related that "I concluded that there were expectations that we should be changing, that we should be setting higher expectations."

These examples suggest that an evaluation of the school is undertaken by the principal upon arrival but it does not suggest or imply the ways and means. Chances are that it is done in a very informal, inconspicuous manner through observation, questioning, and listening. What does appear obvious is that there was mention made or concern expressed about the academic achievement of the students. It might be reasoned that during the initial evaluation of the school, the principal kept the vision foremost in his mind and wanted to examine how closely the school, as it existed then, came to fitting the vision and what the needs were so that ideas could be developed for future changes to enable the realization of the vision.

The Personal Plan and the District Priorities

The personal plans of the principals all related to the academics in some way but seemed to reflect each school situation as it existed. Higher academic expectations, building a positive academic climate, increasing the focus of the library, and improving student assessment to

reflect the development of the child at the junior high school level were some of the items talked about by the principals. Improving student behavior was included in the aims of two principals. Others items of concern were improving communication, improving the school image, using a team approach at each grade level, and increasing the importance of the complementary courses. When talking about the plan, one principal commented that the details were not all thought out nor "all the means of implementing it." But ideas were formulated about the state of the school and what areas were in need of improvement. As part of the 'achievement goal', principal's identified other aspects - climate, discipline, morale, communication - which needed to be attended to in order to ensure the achievement goal. Hence the variety of goals but all with achievement as the major focus.

This particular school district attempts to place principals in situations where senior administration feels they would be most effective. Senior administration attempts to monitor the successes and needs of the schools within the district so that wise and informed decisions can be made in this regard. In addition, efforts are undertaken to be aware of the principal as an individual so that their strengths can be used to advantage. Due to the size of the district, there is a great deal of flexibility which enhances the prospects of matching the principal's philosophy of education with the needs of a school. Thus, it is probably of no surprise to the principal to find that there is a matching of the school needs and his ideas about how students should be educated.

However, the principal, as an employee in this particular school district must recognize and address the priorities established by the school district, and sometimes this direction is given added emphasis by senior administration. An example of this was related by one principal.

> One of the district priorities was to improve student achievement. In the dicussion with the principals in this area, the area superintendent established this as a priority for each one of the schools in the area - not for the system. So every school in the area had to address an achievement priority in some fashion. They could give it any twist or any emphasis that they wanted. So we went to our historical data on how our students did on survey tests and standardized tests ... and picked the areas where there seemed to be a pattern of greatest weakness.

Therefore, the goals that were set not only fitted the personal plan that the principals had for the school but also fell within the priorities set by the school district. As one principal mentioned "you have to do all this within the framework of the school board priorities and goals. Anything that you do has to fit in some how in some area of the plan that has been communicated to us." Principals spent time with the Associate Superintendent to discuss the main directions or the important things that the school should be addressing. It was reported that one Associate Superintendent advised "you can't cover all the territory, let's make some real gains in some." One principal related the process this way

> I make what I call my own personal plan for learning improvement in the school. I share that on an individual basis with our Associate Superintendent and so he knows what that is and so I'm committed to that even before I go to the staff. But it's broad enough so that individual concerns can be brought in and addressed as well. It's not as though it's a very narrow track.

While the whole process may evolve from the district priorities, it was reasoned by one principal that neither he nor his collegues had such

a distinct philosophy or plan that it would be "sufficiently different from the system or my boss." This was further explained in a rather unique manner.

> You may be headed west and everybody may be headed west but you might be a little left or right of west. It's not a matter of just choosing your own direction, it's a matter of adapting to your own situation so that you create the most effective way of going about it.

The idea is to use the district priorities "to move a school a certain direction of your own choosing." This requires that consideration be given to the "means of the school, the resources, and the personnel that you have in the community" and then the principal decides how best to use them. As the result, the goals may even "differ substantially from school to school."

Thus, it appears that a principal in this school district is given guidance in formulating broad school direction by the school board and by senior administration. Using this direction, the principal leads in the selection of school goals that will bring to reality the principal's vision of the school.

In this district, the school goals and budget are used as a planning document. Once the school goals are established, each school sets a budget relating to the achievement of these goals. Sometimes, the entire process of setting goals is referred to as the budget.

Actor Input

The specific school goals, which "are based on the district goals or are certainly related to them", were selected through various means. But, of primary importance, was the "unique opportunity to involve our staff" that existed in this school district because each school has

"control over our finances." "Teachers are very extensively involved" declared one principal, as was the case with the other schools taking part in the research. The methods of involving the teachers varied from school to school.

In one school, the teachers were cross set into groups so that "there will be representatives in those groups from each different subject area." The reason for this was explained.

> In the past I have also used specific subject groups, but the thing that I dislike about that is they tend to have tunnel vision and do not look beyond their own program area. Now, by going in this direction where there is a considerable mix of the staff, they must consider the school as a whole. It forces the issue.

A similiar, but more casual, approach was used by another school as the principal commented "I divided them into groups. It didn't matter who, it was just to get the staff into small groups." Staff meetings and sub committee meetings, which involved dividing the staff into groups of fours, was used to get another staff involved. Using a somewhat different method, another school provided the staff with an opportunity for input and discussion but also had a "budget committee" on which "any person on staff who is interested may participate". The reason for the use of the budget committee was inferred from the following:

> There are, I think, a lot of teachers who are still part of the old school and who are fighting the decision to go to school based planning. They don't like the obligation to have to take time to be involved in the process. ... but there is a wide percentage of our staff who acknowlege that some good comes from the establishment of priorities and plans and I think that we are also developing a new breed of young teachers who have never experienced anything else. They are eager to be involved in the process and as a result have a lot of say in the school.

Input into the school goals that were selected was also solicited from other concerned parties. Parents had input in three of the four

schools involved in the research. One school "involved the public extensively through a survey" to give "parents an opportunity to respond to all aspects of our program." An effective means was devised by the principal to ensure this input.

> We entice the kids to get those (the surveys) back by pizza parties, and as a result we have been able to get about 65% of them back each year for the last three years, and that's provided us with some parental input on the budget and directions that they would like to see us go in.

Another technique to gain parental input was to take the goals "to the parent's advisory meeting." This type of parental input was carried a step further at another school where the parents advisory committee was "even involved this year with the presentation to the trustees of our budget for the coming year."

Support staff, secretaries and custodians, also had input into goal selection in one school while another school brought the input to the student level as "the kids, through the student's coucil, got to have a look at them (the goals) too" and the principal added "they at least felt that they were a part of the school and are getting some input."

When talking about goal selection, the principals gave the emphasis to teacher input but one principal seemed to put the principal's role into perspective when stating:

> The entire plan does not have to just adopt my direction - in other words it doesn't - but my plan has to be included in the total school plan. A lot of the teachers do have their own agendas and we can include those in the plan but I also make sure that my concerns and the areas that need to be addressed as identified by me would also be included in the plan. It works. It works very well.

Staff involvement in goal selection in one school started with an "evaluation" or looking at "what we did last year and how we did on the

areas that we identified last year." Yet another staff were reported to "fine tune in terms of looking at the direction that we were taking last year" and still another principal added "they (the teachers) will review what we have in place." It may be decided that "some goals are repeated again this year or modified in some way so that it progresses" or "we set new goals based on the needs that we may have." Other priorities may be left in "maintenance positions" because it was felt that they "were very good, well written, revised and revised time and time again." Brainstorming sessions or discussions were used to "distill" ideas "into some sort of form that we could use for our planning document" or "to zero in more specifically on that one priority." In general, as one principal indicated "they (teachers) work together in terms of their perceptions of where the school is going, knowing what the background is and what we have done in the past."

Regardless of whether small groups or complete staffs were used for the evaluation, needs assessment, and goal selection with action plans, the staff in all four schools were involved in the final selection of school goals or as one principal acknowledged "we dovetailed it together for that."

Principals have the final responsibility for the formal writing of the goals, action plans and the expected results for the school, and for the presentation of these to a committee of trustees.

Time to work on goals was established by various means. Staff meetings, professional development days and teacher's personal time were used. An example of this was given by one principal when disclosing that

> The groups get together at whatever is the best timing for them. We start that prior to Christmas. We finalize it on our February Professional Development Day. However much time we need to finalize that process is used from that day.

The dedication and commitment required of all personnel to complete the process was attested to by the approach taken to find the time in one school.

> It was all after school this year. In previous years we sometimes used part of our professional development time for this. We haven't this year. It's all been done outside of instructional hours. And they've been long working sessions! We find that the short working sessions of one or two hours were just not productive enough. The longer meetings went from 3:30 into the evening. We brought in supper and continued working so the school actually provided supper for the staff on those two occasions.

The organization of the staff for involvement in goal selection varies from school to school and depends on the size of the school, the commitment of the staff, and personal preferences of those involved. The variety of time choices used reflects the importance of the right choice for a particular group.

It now seems very logical to ask how the principal ensures that the goals selected will be in line with the vision held for the school? There is not a simple, clear, straight forward answer to this question. As has already been indicated, the vision is very broad so that individual concerns can be focused within it. Another factor is that the change takes place over a period of time. One principal related that the school had "shown some really positive growth in that area over the last two years in particular." The first year had been a "feeler, a look see." And then steps were taken "to make changes and I think that continues to develop." On a less positive note, a principal lamented that "when I presented that to my staff, when I first came here, because

that was something that I wanted to move on right away, it was just snowballed right away. That was the end of that." This same principal went on to add that he has moved much more slowly in the past two years and "I think that the results that I am getting now are far greater and will be more beneficial in the long run." The setting of school goals that saw the realization of the vision had to be moved on slowly and a determined effort had to be made for the incorporation of the goals into the work of the school. But it was also evident that without teacher cooperation and agreement that little would change. Hence the importance of teacher involvement in goal setting.

Having established achievement goals, the next step is to implement the plans that would lead to goal fulfillment. How the achievement goals were reflected in the work of the school will be the next research question addressed.

How Were Achievement Goals Reflected In The Work Of The School?

The reflection of the achievement goals in the work of the school involved the administration and the staff working together towards the same ends. Implementing action plans, team effort, delegation of work, department organization, and a visible and accessible principal were all important factors identified by the principals. This work was consistent and ongoing, and a part of the daily operation that was driven by focused attention, constant evaluation of progress and at times prodding to keep the work moving in the set direction.

Working Together Toward the Same End

Once the achievement goals had been established for the school, the leadership of the principal was needed to keep everyone working toward the effective implementation of these goals because as one principal related:

> You have to work with your staff and students to the point where they are also accepting those goals and working in that direction. Not everybody may be doing that, but I think the vast majority would be working towards them and reminding the students of what the expectations were.

It was also suggested that "the leadership of the guy at the top" (principal) was necessary to provide some "common direction" for the work of the teachers. When the implementation of the goals involves many people, as it does in the school situation, the common direction seems essential because it would be very easy for the teacher to shut the door and pursue a personal direction. Goal achievement is brought about by the enactment of the action plan which of course varies with the goal and the situation.

In order to more fully understand the action plan, an example, given by one of the principals, will be outlined. The goal was to improve student achievement in two specific subject areas. While the entire plan included the expected results and the indicators of the success of the results, only the action plan will be outlined as related by the principal.

> I think that the fact that the home was involved to a greater degree than it has been before, that we had established a better reporting system to the parents, and the fact that there was more emphasis on the quality of work within the classroom were big factors. The study habits of the students was a big one, and we are actually continuing it. ... This was a great deal of work. And most of the work went into this part of our action plan. Sample material

> was filed and reviewed with parents. We made a big thing of having good notes, organized notes, and gave marks on the report card for having notes. ... There was an effort made to instill some self discipline. I call it intensity. In the program, the teacher might indicate that 'this is important', and just the communication of that kind of message seems to create a little extra attention in an area.

While other principals did not directly address the action plan used by their school, one principal reported that "some significant changes" had been implemented concerning "student promotion and evaluation." Rather than only using the results of regular examinations, changes were made to include student attendance, classroom participation, and the assignments completed in the evaluation of the student. If these items were ignored the principals reasoned that "we were losing out in terms of the rounded, work oriented, responsible individual." It was added that "we are now looking at the contributions that the students bring on a daily basis over a period of time. Those are the things that are going to pay off" and contribute to the "total growth of the child." This principal had become instrumental in making these changes. Having brought all departments, except one, to "a position where they wanted to move" on the changes in student evaluation policies, the one department was told to "make this decision on your own or I'll make it for you." The department was instructed to come up with a plan that they felt was "reasonable but which has these criteria and these components in it." As a concluding comment the principal attested:

> Now I don't beleive there is anybody on staff who would ever go back to the other way. Not only that, but you can see in the daily work of the students that there is an emphasis on the assignments, and there is an emphasis on homework that is checked on a regular basis - as it should be.

At another school, the principal became very involved in the specifics of the work for the achievement of some of the goals. Increasing communication with the home came under his care as he indicated that "I check the attendance myself and I make a point of phoning the parent." He added "I like doing that. It gives me contact with the parents. Sometimes when I'm on the phone I'll have a little chat about the kid." Of course there is the other side as you "phone - no answer, phone - no answer, sometimes you get that." However, attendance was not a problem because "most of the kids are like (name deleted), missed a half a day or been absent once." The communication goal seemed to tie in very nicely with a goal that "I don't even write up anymore because I have done it for so many years. It's part of the school." This goal concerned a process whereby teachers made commments about individuals in their class for each class taught throughout the day. These sheets provided the principal with a great deal of information and "this turns out to be a positive tool" because teachers have an opportunity to indicated "you're excellent, or you have forgotten your work, or you didn't do your homework, you were late, you weren't prepared" to the student. The principal tallies these sheets on a regular basis and when needed writes "home to this little fellow's mom and dad."

In working toward one school's goal of improving the transition into grade seven, the homeroom teacher was charged with the responsibility of couselling that group of students. A longer time was also designated for homeroom activities. The principal of this school indicated that "I look specifically at who are going to be homeroom

teachers in grade seven because that is very critical. There are much different requirements of the teacher at the grade seven level than at the grade nine level where the kids are accustomed to the expectations and know where they are going." These teachers have specific responsibilities to perform during the homeroom time such as "helping the class make sure they have all their materials together, that they know what periods are coming in a row and any special activities that might be going on during the day." These teachers would also be the first contact person in the event of a concern with a particular child. Homeroom teachers of grade eight and nine classes see the extra time as problematic but this time is used for free reading if there is nothing to discuss with the class. Each classroom has a supply of books for this. The principal did recognize the problem but felt that it could be overcome.

Along a similar line of thinking was "the involvement of students with their classroom teacher in setting their own kinds of expectations and then looking at those from report card to report card with the teacher." It is a manner of checking to see if the student "really achieved what they thought they could and could they have achieved more." This principal acknowledged that it was "one of the things that we have been working on" but "not uniformly across the school." The involvement was explained as happening "where people are ready to move."

From the above accounts, it seems that principals become at least indirectly involved in the implementation of the plans that will see the fulfillment of the school goals. How the principal chooses to become involved may relate to the things that they like to do and to their

personal ideas on how to lead. While some actions were taken unilaterally, generally principals gave teachers time to assess and try out the change before making it a standard operating procedure. For the teachers, as well as for the students, the school had a climate conducive to learning. The school involves many people working together and thus the team effort is of importance when determining how the goals are reflected in the work of the school.

The team concept was very extensively developed in one of the larger schools involved in the study. The principal of this school indicated that team leaders were identified "for bringing these groups of teachers together to discuss common concerns, common issues with respect to the curriculum, with respect to instruction, with respect to student behavior and attitude at a particular grade." In addition to the subject instruction - curriculum emphasis through one team setting, a second team setting existed and was headed by a grade coordinator-counsellor at each grade level. The tasks of the coordinator-counsellor were "to look specifically at and work with teachers and students in terms of attitude, socialization, transition into grade seven from elementary school and of course at the grade nine level, their transition into senior high school." The leaders for the latter team come from within the school and are people who wanted to do the job and felt "ownership for it." The principal "indicated to begin with that I was not going outside" to fill the positions but that "I wanted to draw from the pool that we had here." His feelings were "I think that is going to pay off a lot more." To enable the leader to get to know the students extensively, the leader will move through the

grades with the students. And "the students should really get to know them (coordinator-cousellors) as individuals whom they can talk to about many different kinds of things."

The use of the department for curriculum coordination was common place among the principals interviewed. One principal seemed to sum it up for them all when stating:

> We use them in the dollar part of our budget when we have to determine what the resource needs are. They tell me what curriculum materials need to be purchased and introduced, and what changes are being made and so on, but I don't review with each teacher the course of studies or anything like that. But the department heads certainly do and that is part of their job.

Subject area departments in some schools were required to set department goals relating to the school goals while in other schools the school goals were just adopted by the subject areas. Regardless of the approach, there was a continuity of the school goals to the subject areas.

The team concept was inferred in different ways by the principals. One principal disclosed that "I am using the word 'we' as opposed to 'me' because I think that I have that strong support of the school" while another principal indicated "I've got to delegate a lot to my staff." This same thought pattern was revealed by another principal who granted that "you have to have the ability to delegate and have individuals pick up the slack and accept that responsibility. And you have to feel confident that those with delegated responsibility are prepared and able to handle most situations." These comments were elaborated on by one principal when stating:

> I would work with the coordinators (department leaders), because they are very instrumental in making a change, to get them

> accepting of the kind of change that I wanted to have in place. Then usually what I do, so that the ownership would be there, is ask them to then carry on with their staff and work toward the goal. I would also let them know that if they ran into blocks or things they could not deal with that they could come back and I would work some more with them.

A somewhat more dogmatic approach to team work was indicated by another principal.

> I think that if the team work is nurtured and fostered effectively by the administrator, the team will then accept that there are times when the buck stops here and that the principal has to make certain decisions. They respect the fact that there are times when they may have no real say in terms of what comes down from the principal, but they will also recognize that there are other times when they are given the opportunity to give input and have full say and decide as a group the direction that we are taking.

This same principal continued to expand his ideas on the importance of team work by indicating that teachers may not feel satisfied "unless teachers are working together and their is some coordination from the top" and that if teachers were "fighting the administration" it would be "reflected right through the program " because the students and other staff members "would read that." Showing a slight contrast or perhaps making more allowances for individual differences, another principal hoped that everyone on staff was working together toward the same ends but added that "realizing that we have a large number on staff, I am sure that not everyone is at the same place." As if a concluding thought, "I think most are" was added.

Team effort was of importance to all principals when it came to the workings of the school. Department teams were used to coordinate curriculum and instruction. Realizing that one person could not do all the jobs involved, the principals also delegated out work. However, the team aspect was carried much further in one school that in others. Size

may have been a factor at this school but more importantly the teams that were formed were a means to the realization of goals. Principals, as part of the team, had contributed to the work of the school.

Being visible and accessible was important to some of the principals interviewed. For one principal, getting out of the office and into the classroom was considered to be a major task and when he was not busy in the office he would go to a classroom and indicate that the teacher could have a coffee break. An example was given of visiting an Industrial Arts class and talking to the students about what they were making. "The kids love it. You have to be visible" commented the principal, and then you get to see what is going on and learn what is going on with the kids. The following expresses a similar line of thought:

> When I went to school, when I was a kid, you were afraid of the principal. Probably the reason we were afraid of him was that we didn't know him. He was never out in the school. So these kids know that they can come and talk to me anytime. They're even willing to come in and complain about a teacher, and I listen. They're usually wrong but I listen.

Knowing all the kids in the school was considered important for one principal. He talked "to each kid in the school once a month" and felt that the result was that "the kids know who I am and what I am all about." A similar comment was made by another principal in that he too spent "a lot of time visiting classrooms" and "in the halls." It was also indicated that "I always talk to them. I always have good things to say to them and about them." As interesting bi-products "you pick things up without even knowing that you're doing it. If there is a problem with a teacher you hear the kids grumbling and I try to step in before it

gets to be a problem" and "where there have been negative things, the kids have rallied in terms of the type of support that I wanted from them, or the kind of cooperation that I wanted from them."

One principal did not talk about discipline problems but instead talked about "helping kids in trouble", and felt that it was one of his strong points. This was also the case with another principal because our interview appointment was delayed as he helped a student who was having problems.

When referring to the tasks that he did on a daily basis another principal contended that the things that he wanted to see "happening in the long run" were the things that he tried "to incorporate into" his "everyday involvement in the school." He tried to set himself up as a "type of model" so that the kids would "feel comfortable" and would "know that they can come and talk to me at any point in time about anything, and that I will always try to respond to them in a positive way." This principal also added that "I will work the same way with my staff."

The words of one principal regarding his relationship with students seems to be indicative of the views of the other principals.

> I believe that they will see me as a fair, reasonable, understanding individual, and when you meet them in the future years you will know. They will be pleased to come back. Pleased to come and see you. Pleased to stop and talk to you when they meet you in the store or whatever.

However, similar happenings occurred with the teachers. As one principal put it "a lot of communication is ongoing." His door was "open all of the time" and the teachers knew that they could "come in and discuss directions." The communication was "frequent" but not "formal."

Or, the principal added "I could go up and watch and discuss with either classes or teachers. It's a fairly relaxed way of operating."

These principals placed emphasis on knowing the students and being with them. It was part of their work but a part that they gave the impression of enjoying. An effort was required in order to be available but it was not an effort to care about the student, it came naturally. This seemed to tie in with their effort to accomplish the goals that were set because by knowing the students and talking to them they could get an informal idea of the progress of the work of the school in goal achievement. Much of the same sort of thing happened with the teachers as principals were available for discussion with the teachers as needs arose, and to complement this, the teachers were available when the principal needed to initiate the discussion. The work of the school, aimed at the achievement of goals, involved people working together toward the same ends and this work was ongoing and consistent.

Work Was Ongoing and Consistent

The work toward the achievement of goals was ongoing in that reevaluation of progress toward goal accomplishment was undertaken, the principals engaged in prodding to keep work moving toward the desired ends, the attention was focused, and in general the work for goal success was part of the everyday happenings of the school.

Progress toward goal achievement was monitored because as one principal related the goals must have "a result based indicator" so that you know "whether you are achieving what you said you were going to achieve." Sometimes the schools made their "own surveys", which was "difficult " and "a great deal of work," sometimes "system or provincial

achievement tests" were used, and sometimes "information that we get from parent groups" was used to assess progress on goal achievement.

It was also alleged that "as the plan unfolds you are constantly, as an administrator, reevaluating where your plan is going and what you have accomplished so far." This sometimes "involves "a modification of the plan." When one school "ran into difficulties" with their goal achievement plan, the principal pointed out that "We had a brainstorming session about what we were going to do. So we embarked on a modified program and we modified our plans." One principal counseled that "There can never be a contentedness or you're going to have to face some harsh realities some day when somebody lays a heavy on you, whether it is a parent, or a staff member, or a kid or what have you." Along the same line of thinking, it was revealed that:

> You always sit back and look to see if things are just grinding too slowly here or if we're not making progress there and if we need an extra push. Then you go back to the people and say "What can we do here that will break the stalemate?" And this happens quite frequently. ... You do it because of what you observe happening and sort of the chemistry of the process. And if you feel that people are losing interest or the grind is setting in, you begin to look for things to restart it and re-initiate some energy.

One common form of evaluation was to look at the student report cards. It was "an opportune time to review what was happening and to see how things were going" and to see "whether we are on track, whether we're doing the kind of things we said we were doing or do we have to change." It was "sort of an automatic time to review." As one principal reported, "I look at the grade averages of each class for each grade for each report card, and if I see a differential I'll go and find out what is going on."

Carrying this a step further, another school sent out interm reports about six weeks before the official report cards. A different type of evaluation presented itself by this action. This evaluation was more for the sake of the individual student and the home. Sometimes a tutor or peer tutoring was the suggested remedy while at other times "this was a kick in the rear" and the parents got "on the kids' backs." Students that had below 50% on any subject or if they were below 60% in two subjects had a letter sent home. It was effective, according to the principal, because letters were sent to about "one third of the students" last interm reporting period but when it came to the "official report card time very few students failed." This type of evaluation may have served as a signal to not only the student and the parents that the child was progressing poorly but it may have also been a signal to the teachers and the principal that the child's needs were not being met and thus have promoted discussion regarding how that might be rectified.

Evaluation took different forms at different times. This meant that formal evaluations were carried out on some occasions but at other times the evaluation of the school's progress toward goal achievement relied more on the intuition of the principal. Nevertheless, the evaluation of progress revealed a need for the principal to do some prodding so that work was once again directed at the established goals.

Keeping the work moving toward goal achievement involved the principal prodding himself as well as others. One principal considered himself to be a "seed planter" which involved "giving the little reminder" about "the kinds of things that we are doing" so that work would "keep on track." It was also added "I like to keep the positive

word out there." For another principal this meant providing teachers with "support" and being "part of their team" so that teachers knew that they "are not just in there (the classroom) by themselves" and that there is somebody else who can "share in some of the concerns that they have." This was also related as "positive reinforcement of the staff for a job well done."

Working with particular teachers was part of the prodding according to one principal who related the following when referring to one subject area:

> Because I knew we were weak, I was working with a particular teacher, and unfortunately it was a situation - the teacher's predicament - that I didn't have a lot of say over in terms of the individual coming here. I had to work with what I had, and I think that the individual is a very knowledgable individual, and has a lot to offer to our program.

For another principal getting the staff, students, and parents on side for the implementation of a project was not easy and he had "problems putting it in." The teacher thought that it would be "more paper work", the kids thought that it was unfair because they "couldn't even miss a homework without getting caught", and the parents thought that it was "like 1984" because he was "checking every single thing my kid is doing." It seems that the principal showed them the advantages and as the principal added, "it's become an accepted thing by all groups" but "some use it better than others." The principal admitted that he made an error in implementing the project school wide the first year. In hind sight, he felt that he should have implemented it with grade seven the first year and then gone to the grade seven and eights the next year and then implemented it in the whole school the next year.

An example of prodding was given by one of the principals. The principal was inquiring why the teacher had not sent any students who had improved to see him, which was a school policy. The teacher had told the principal "I don't like doing it this way" to which the principal replied "Well what way are you doing it?" "So long as they are being positive, I don't mind" the principal added. But the point was that the principal was encouraging the teacher to do that part of the job.

Another principal "had to keep after" the teachers about keeping the communication channels flowing. He also used staff meetings to "bring up little concerns." Written devices were used as a method of reminding teachers of concerns by one principal and in another school the principal used a novel poster like display that also included positive accomplishments.

For one principal, the goals themselves served as a personal prod. This was explained in a unique manner.

> They (goals) make me measure how well I'm doing. Now I'm sure that I did these things before, but I never had to be accountable for how I did. If I did well, then great but I never really knew how well I did or if I did lousy. So I have gotten into the habit of keeping records and then the records tell me that I've done O.K., or that I had better smarten up. So yes, writing them down makes me accountable. I didn't like that at first because there were some things that I tried that didn't work. Then I figured that it was better to know that they didn't work than to keep flogging a dead horse.

The prodding which served to keep the staff working toward the school goals seemed to be personally spoken words or written comments to teachers or the staff in general. However, the prodding may have served the additional purpose of keeping the attention focused.

Focusing the work of the school on the goals was of importance to the accomplishment of the goals. In some cases finding out "what has been done in research" was used to gather information, at other times "professional development time that is provided by the school board" was used to address the work of the school, and at other times staff meetings were used. One principal indicated that "we may assign every second staff meeting strictly to addressing our emphasis for that year." Other examples were given such as inviting in guest speakers to address the area of concern and visiting other schools that have addressed the concern before to gather information that can be adapted to suit the specific school involved.

One principal maintained "I don't think that we were doing anything special, it is just probably that we were doing it better than we were in the past" when commenting on why the school had improved academically. He also felt that it was the "little things, doing the little things more frequently and a little better and paying more attention to that" that were of importance. However, for another principal, it was the focusing of attention for a period of time. The goals that were identified "some over a year ago, will stay in place over the next two years. We may in fact modify them in part as we see the results coming in, but essentially they are in place now."

Thus the work of the school involved focusing attention on the goals that were to be addressed. And this attention was not a sporatic thing but something that happened as part of the everyday happenings of the school.

The goals are reflected in the work of the school on a daily basis and as one principal reasoned "It seems to me that they are reflected in most everything that we do." This same principal went on to add:

> I think that once you are in a mode of working along these lines, and realizing that something needs to transpire with this particular person or that particular person or child, then let's make sure that we have the right people involved in making those decisions or at least having an opportunity for input into those decisions. The more you work in that mode, the more it becomes commonplace and almost sub-conscious.

On a similar line of thought another principal expressed the idea that the goals are "there all of the time" but constant verbal reference is not made to them. "It's part of you and your philosophy and the way you are. You don't do one thing over here and do something else over there" was how another principal make reference to the reflection of the goals in the workings of the school. Consistent over a period of time and using what you have to the best advantage were inferred from what other principals said.

On a more personal note one principal declared that the goals helped him to set priorities on his daily work because if "I have twelve things to do" and if he needed to "drop off four or five" due to lack of time, "The ones that I drop off will not be the important ones that are tied to my goals. Those will be there first." For another principal, the fact that goals are worked at on a daily basis has made him become "more patient myself. I am not as anxious to change the whole world overnight as I used to be."

In this study goals are definitely reflected in the workings of the school as people worked together on the implementation of the action plan through a team setting under the leadership of the principal. This

work was ongoing and involved evaluation, prodding, focused attention, and was an everyday occurrance.

What was done to increase the likelihood that the work would lead to the realization of the achievement goals will be the next research question to be addressed.

What Was Done To Enhance Goal Success?

The enhancement of goal success was mainly referred to by the principals interviewed under the categories of building a positive school image, establishing and maintaining a positive school climate, and the effectiveness of instruction. Image building included community relations work by the principal and parental involvement while the establishment of a school climate conducive to learning received emphasis through talk of appropriate student deportment, and the appearance of the physical plant. The most appropriate placement of teachers, the importance of the master teacher, and the value of performance appraisals were noted when principals talked of instructional effectiveness.

Building a Positive School Image

School image improvement was seen by one principal as extremely important for goal success enhancement. This was undoubtably due to the poor public image of the school when he arrived as he referred to "rebuilding basic perceptions that community members had. Our school had a tag that we had to begin to change and convert." For him "one of the

biggest developments that we had to push for was the public relation aspect of our entire program." This meant that he had to do some "extensive public relations work to let people know that they were welcome, that we had high expectations, behaviorally and academically, for our students, and that we did have a good teaching staff." Parents provided valuable assistance in this aspect of the public relations work.

> They heard that we were up against a wall in terms of image and that we needed to attempt to get a different story out to the community. They have been extremely helpful and beneficial in doing that, because so much of it travels by word of mouth.

The telling of the improvement in the school was tied in very extensively with parental involvement in other ways. For example, the parents advisory group "sent a letter to the parents of grade six students in all of our feeder schools inviting them to an open forum to meet the principal and to talk to the parents" of students of the school. The principal elaborated on this meeting.

> They had an opportunity to listen to me for about 30 minutes on the philosophy of the school, direction, and discipline which are some of the key points that grade six parents are interested in. Then we would have a 30 minute coffee break where I would have about a dozen to fifteen advisory parents who were there to initiate conversation in small groups, just in a social atmosphere, so grade six parents would have an opportunity to hear parent to parent what is happening. .... That was very effective. Then they had the last 30 minutes to hit me point blank with specifics. ... Basically we had a good evening.

Thus parents were used to "spread a lot of good will by word of mouth throughout the community" and tell others "this is a good place," and consequently the parents wanted to send their kids to this school for schooling.

A similar response was given by another principal who spent "a fair amount of time in the community." Community in this case meant "the ten elementary schools that we receive students from." This principal indicated that he met "with parents", "with the staffs of those schools", and "with the principals", and as the result they knew him "quite well." "We are talking about a fairly large area" added the principal which indicated the dedication required to complete the task and the importance attached to it by the principal. The transmission of the school image was also noted by this principal who stated:

> There has been an extremely strong response from the parents and the community about the school and the work that the school is doing. It is noted for the behavior of the students, noted for its firm yet reasonable discipline, and noted for its high expectations.

Problably the words of one principal, "but it pays off", best sums up the thoughts on community relations work.

As already hinted, parental involvement played a role in the enhancement of goal success. In all of the schools, parents were involved. Three of the principals spoke of the importance of parent advisory groups while one principal indicated how parents were directly involved in the action plans for the goals because the teachers worked closely with parents in communicating the students' academic progress on a continuous basis.

In the three schools where parent advisory groups were formed, the groups had grown into effective organizations. As one principal acknowledged "When I came here there was no formal parent involvement whatsoever, so the first thing I did was form a parent advisory group." Another principal saw the formation of a parent organization as "an

immediate goal" while yet another principal indicated that for him "it was a vehicle to change the school image."

The feelings of one principal regarding parental involvement seem to be indicated in the following:

> But certainly right from the beginning four years ago, we were able to entice parents in. They didn't feel threatened by me. They felt that I was genuine in terms of wanting to have them involved in a variety of aspects of our program. So right from the beginning we had between 25 and 30 parents who were all of a sudden showing up to parent advisory meetings. We had grade representatives and in general a very functional group that was willing to hear me, to help me, and to assist me in any way they could.

This principal also implied that parents were involved with the drawing up of agendas, setting meeting times and advertising the meetings. It was not an "administration directed program" but was run through the groups "executive." Only one principal mentioned that the parent advisory group had a constitution.

Parental involvement took many forms. In one school "the library was a disgrace. The books were outdated, the shelves were dusty, the room was cluttered, and it was more like a storage space than a library. The parents got behind me" and for three years "they've run an auction" to raise money for the library. They have also helped by doing various "things in the library to make it a welcoming place, to make it the place where kids want to be for learning."

Other examples of parental involvement included assisting with grade six parent orientation meetings, as previously mentioned, "providing help with functions", "scholarship funds", "assistance in the building", "promotion by word of mouth", "graduations", "publication of pages in the school newletters", "budget presentations to the trustees",

and the "promotion of the band program." One school was going to try to get the parents involved "a little more in the classroom without actually having them teach."

Parental involvement on a social level was encouraged by one principal. These functions were held in the school and a fashion show was given as an example. Working together was important because as the principal related "If you can get people involved on an informal level, you build relationships that become very strong. They see school as maybe not being what they had thought it was according to the days when they went to school themselves and see that it can be a very pleasant place to be."

Extensive community relations work and parental involvement were seem as possible means to enhance the school image, thereby enhancing the chance of goal success at the school. The establishment of a positive school climate may have also increased the likelihood of goal success.

Establish and Maintain a Positive School Climate

In the general category of establishing a positive school climate, principals mainly discussed items that reflected student deportment and in one case the physical plant.

Student deportment was one item that three of the four principals talked about as a goal enhancer but some principals stressed it more that others. The emphasis may have reflected the situation that the principal inherited, and thus the ease with which students learned to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate for a school setting.

A principal who gave considerable emphasis to student deportment commented "Basically what we had to do was begin to break down ten years of negative behavior that a large portion of this school's population had been involved in." However, the principal added, a new respect had developed for all aspects of the school programs and "that is so very critical." A detailed example, given by the principal, seems to be the best way to illustrate the point.

> I have a fairly mixed bag of kids in terms of socio-economics, but I have a lot of kids who come from affluent homes. There are a lot of skateboarders in this building, more so than many junior high schools. ... Each spring and each fall, I meet with these kids and tell them that they must understand that there are certain guidelines to be abided by and that they must know that when they come into this building that the skateboard is in hand and goes into the locker, and when they leave the building it is in hand until they're outside and then go ahead. I don't want any damage in the building. The kids have really been good. I threatened them last fall. We had a meeting and settled our differences. I didn't have any problems after the second week of school last fall. This spring, I noticed marks in the hallway around the front end of the building. I was a little bit sick about it because there probably had been ten skateboards, or one kid ten times, through the halls on some freshly waxed floors. There was one mark on the wall about two feet up. One bash. So I called the kids in and informed them that I was trying to meet them half way but for the next ten days there was a ban on skateboards in the building. As of the next day any student who walked into the building with a skateboard would be sent home. I thought I was going to have major turmoil on my hands. I also indicated that I was hopeful that over the next week or so there would be a delegation of students who would meet with me so we could sort this out. The kids have to accept some responsibility for policing what's happening here. I thought that I'd have a battle for the next ten days but I have not had one attempt by a kid to bring a skateboard into the school so there is some respect that has been developed and nurtured over time. That was a pretty harsh move - probably one of the harshest moves that I've had to make in terms of setting rules. I don't like rules. I have been very appreciative of the respect that they have shown.

Another principal commented that there had been a significant improvement in the way the students "respond to people, to visitors and so on" but "you are always going to have a certain segment of your

population that are going to be problematic ... when you are dealing with such large numbers." This school stressed attendance, as did all of the other schools involved in the research. Attendance was monitored daily and incentives were given for high attendance as part of the effort to teach children that "you have to live with reality" and that somethings must be "accepted as unchangeable" while other things that are "going to have an impact on you are changeable." The results "that truancy is almost non-existent" and the children were learning to be "responsible" were the closing comments of the principal on this subject. It was inferred that student conduct in all matters were important to the school.

At another school, the principal was adamant about student deportment as the following comment illustrates:

> I think the whole deportment of your students is critical. I can show you a master teacher who may have a class that reflects a different attitude because of the attitude that's been developed in the building. So I think that something that has to be developed, as almost an inborn thing, is appropriate student deportment. It affects what's happening in the classroom. That comes from above. The incorporation of that goal through your stafff.

The manner in which students conduct themselves in the school affects learning and thus appropriate, responsible behavior enhances goal success. One principal felt that there were "practically no discipline problems - which is the end result of being a big family." It appeared that appropriate conduct was achieved in this school through the incorporation of the principal's philosophy which was that the whole school was viewed as a family and that positive conduct should be reinforced. The principal had developed a system which allowed him to carefully monitor and reward positive student conduct, and to encourage

students who had not quite met the standards. This principal was very involved with the students and almost a father figure. If he saw "a kid miserable for some reason," he would "try to help the kid." This was reinforced by the comment that if a student was "failing academically, they come down to me and I plan their success. And when they succeed, I pat them on the back. They love it." The whole effort was summed up by the prinicipal when he stated that he wanted the school to be a "happy, friendly, secure place with the emphasis on doing well - as well as you can. If a little kid is only getting 55% in academics, and that is all they can do, I still pat them on the back."

While all four of the schools that I visited were very pleasant, clean, tidy buildings, one principal commented on this because he felt that:

> If the place looks good you are creating an atmosphere for kids that they will respect. I think that respect begins to show itself in their entire deportment in the building. In the behavior, in the relationships between administration and kids, and among teachers, kids, custodians, and secretarial staff.

It should be noted that this school had undergone some major repair work and changes in the custodial staff since the arrival of the principal.

The deportment of the students was felt to influence the learning of the students. Students were to act in a responsible, sensible manner at all times in the school. This seems to reflect the principals philosophy of education, and in one case positive reinforcement was given emphasis by the principal. Attendance was viewed as an important part of the picture and was stressed in all four schools as I noted from my observations while waiting for interviews with the principals and from the interviews. It seems that principals felt that students

must behave in a consistent manner in the school, and what happened outside the classroom influenced what happened inside the classroom. At the same time, from my personal observations, students in all schools seemed very happy and maybe even glad to be at school!

Principals gave emphasis to student deportment for the enhancement of goal success but instructional effectiveness, which included the most appropriate placement of teachers, the importance of the master teacher, and the value of performance appraisals, was also felt to enhance goal success.

Effective Instruction

To improve instructional effectiveness two principals spoke of the "appropriate utilization of staff" as an important consideration. While this was a major consideration for one principal where low teacher turnover was compounded by a small school enrolment, the other principals only made casual mention of this aspect of enhancing goal success. The principal who was concerned about appropriate staff untiization indicated that he now had "people finally shuffled to where I think that we're getting the most out of them." This was done in a manner that was "not threatening" but was based on the "recognition on the part of all individuals that it was for the betterment of the program and possibly for the betterment of the teachers." Expertise was utilized more fully. Some teachers were much more effective in some areas and grade levels than others so "we've had some major shuffles here" and "it has been effective for us."

One principal mentioned that he knew "how important the teaching staff was and another commented "it's easy to have a good school if you

have a good staff." The aspect of master teachers was only mentioned incidentially. However, all principals did bring up and pursue the topic of teacher performance appraisals as an aspect that enhanced goal success.

In all cases the performance appraisals of the teacher involved the teacher setting personal goals, or what the principals general referred to as objectives. In one school the principal's performance appraisal plan placed the emphasis "on the individual being reponsible for, first of all identifying those objectives, tying them in with the school wherever possible, and then working out a plan and effecting that plan." Another principal indicated that some of the goals set with teachers were "individual improvement goals" that might relate to "an area or target that should be addressed" by the individual but the goals might also relate to some "major school activity or planning." In this school, the goals of the teachers were "evaluated on the basis of results." All principals established the evaluation procedures with the teachers during a one on one conference, visited the classrooms to observe the teacher teaching, and then based on the observation gave the teacher feedback. This happened twice a year but it must be remembered, as one principal reminded me, "the Department of Education demanded that there be an evaluation process."

Performance appraisal gave one principal "an opportunity to zero in on that individual a little more carefully in terms of what he or she may be producing in the classroom relative to day to day operation, relative to achievement, behavior or whatever." For another principal it

was an opportunity to pass on effective teaching ideas, especially for "new teachers."

In another school, the principal saw the process as a "personal plan" where "personal growth and improvement of the individual" were of importance. It was "up to that person to really work towards that end." At the same time, the principal saw himself "as part of the process in that I will do whatever I can to facilitate, assist, and support the individual." He also retained "the right to request objectives or goals for any staff member to be included."

Having the teachers set goals for the performance appraisal "influences the operation of the school and what is happening in the school", according to one principal. Another principal felt that it "gives us a good opportunity for taking a second look at where we have been headed as a school" and what is "happening in your specific area relative to the school's priorities." As if in closing he said "It's good."

Performance appraisals of teachers may give principals opportunities or maybe forces principals to meet and talk to teachers on a one to one basis about their personal efforts in the school. This probably improves communication, gets the principal into the classroom to actually observe what is happening, and provides the principal who has expertise, with an opportunity to provide advice on the improvement of instruction and to generally assist the teacher in becoming more effective. Of more importance, this talk time gave the principal an opportune time to give positive reinforcement to the teacher concerning the happenings that the teacher has been involved in.

The work that was done in the school to enhance goal success was difficult to differentiate from the general work that was for goal achievement. In the case of these four principals, the efforts directed at the enhancement of goal success were those things done to build a positive school image, to build a positive school climate, and to develop instructional effectiveness.

Based on the experiences derived from working in a school that improved student learning, the principals were asked to give advice to other junior high school principals who wanted to improve learning in their schools.

What Advice Would Principals Give To Others Seeking To Improve The Student Achievement Levels In Their Own Junior High Schools?

In reporting the advice that the principals would give to other junior high school principals seeking to improve student learning in their schools, it seemed logical to present each principal's advice as a unit without making comparisons. Hopefully this will provide the advice from each person with unity and cohesion. The exception to this is the advice that was offered on dealing with the unique aspects of the junior high school setting.

Advice From Principal "A"

The first principal interviewed felt that the "greatest motivator for improvement is to set a goal and then to make sure that your community and your staff hold you accountable for it." It "was surprising" according to this principal, how the process begins to work

"as long as we are accountable for it." But the goals were "not just something that can be left in a drawer." He added that teachers were professional and "they want to do well and this gives them the opportunity to focus on an area and show that it can be successful" and that "they can be successful." Unfortunately the principal added, "I don't have a recipe for you."

Advice From Principal "B"

"There is no administrator who is just going to jump in and find himself in a position to improve achievement that year" counselled the second principal interviewed. One has to "look at an overall long range plan" and has to "assess the environment and all aspect of the program." At the same time "some major steps have to be taken in the first year or two to establish a process whereby there is a very positive respect that students begin to develop for what comes down through the principal's office." Control must be gained initially over "student behavior" to "assist your teachers" and a "tone" must be "set within the building that allows you to produce" changes. "Once you have the behavior under control I think you're then in a position where you can get into actual consistent gains in terms of reaching a satisfactory level of achievement." The staff must also "know that the administration has some pretty high expectations in terms of what happens in the classroom." For this principal improving learning in the school meant giving consideration to "personnel, the curriculum, how you apply the curriculum, how you as the administrator monitor curriculum application, and how administrators work with the teachers in terms of developing

teacher effectiveness and their own personal effectiveness." Teachers have to "know that you are with them, not against them."

Advice From Principal "C"

The advice that another principal gave on how to improve student learning focused on the student. He indicated that you must "start with success" because the "kids will only work when they've experienced success." In addition the students must be "treated with dignity and respect." He believed emphatically that the principal must "teach" and "get out and be with the kids."

Advice From Principal "D"

The last principal interviewed felt that in order to improve student learning, emphasis must be placed "on the setting of appropriate expectations for the kids and letting them know that we believed, as a staff, that they are capable of doing the work and how they can share in that" and "that everything that they do counts." Staff support was essential and that "takes awhile" so "be patient" but remember that "ultimate success comes about through solid team effort." At first the principal should "spend a lot of time in discussion, in listening and in observing" with staff, students and parents. Time must be given for "teachers to sit back, reflect, and look ahead" and in general to think about doing things differently for effectiveness.

The Uniqueness of the Junior High School

All of the principals agreed that working with the junior high school aged child presented challenges unique to that age group. One principal commented that you "recognize that and work around that or with that and it seems like a normal day." Children from the ages of 11

to 16 years are going through a time in their lives that "creates numerous problems" and all these problems become "wrapped up in their school work." The physical and emotional changes seem to give rise to socialization problems. They make "bad decisions", there is a lack of "good mature peer modeling", "there is incredible peer pressure on them", they are "easily exploited", and they seem to have "little means to do the kinds of things that they want to do." These things "pose major problems for us in terms of school" because it interferes "with the ability of the kid to settle down and worry about his education." One principal lamented that he often had to "remind teachers and parents that at the junior high school age, the curriculum is sometimes the least important thing." The "growth of the individual and their acceptance of themselves" must be "nurtured" and then "we can take any curriculum and put it to them and they are in a position to accept it." Through the "understanding of where the kids are coming from" and "letting the kids know that they are good" we can "circumvent a lot of problems."

Summary

Data analysis, consisting of the presentation of categories of ideas resulting from the interviews with junior high school principals, was the concentration of this chapter. A categorical analysis of data pertaining to each research question was given. The next chapter will focus on the themes arising from the data.

Chapter Five

THEMES ARISING FROM THE DATA

Themes that emerged from transcript and personal log book data will be given in this chapter in order to further the reader's understanding of what an effective principal does. The themes that emerged were as follows: the principal cared about the school, the principal knew what was happening in the school and led the happenings, the school revolved around a spirit of community, and there was a sense of achievement in the progress of the school.

The Principal Cared About The School

The principals involved in the research cared about all aspects of the school. This included the students, the teachers, the parents, and the building itself. These principals cared that students succeeded academically to the best of their ability and directed the activities of the school toward this end. Goals were set with the hope that improved student achievement would result and the work of the school revolved around achieving these goals.

These principals cared that their personal vision for the school was realized and set about providing the means for that realization. Whether the vision was a set image or that which evolved with time did not seem to be of significance because a vision was there to direct their leadership and thus their actions and thinking.

Caring that the students learned, principals followed individual plans based on the needs of the school to see the fulfillment of the vision. This meant that principals cared that the goals were set and that the district priorities were addressed. The ideas of others were valued. The expectation that students would conducted themselves in a responsible manner, the placement of teachers to enhance effectiveness, the involvement of parents in the workings of the school, and the desire to provide pleasant school surroundings all demonstrated the caring of the principal. Expectations regarding these items become reality with the determined effort of the principal.

The caring led to a team approach with everyone working toward the enhancement of learning in the school. The leadership provided by the principal set the tone for the school, and as though contageous, the caring was passed to the staff, students and parents. However, caring by itself was not enough. The principals also were very involved in the workings of the school.

The Principal Knew and Led What Was Happening In The School

In all cases the principal knew what was happening in the school. This involved knowing how goal achievement was progressing and taking steps to lead this progress. The implementation of the action plans for goal success were carefully monitored and adjusted as needed with the advancement of the year. While one principal had developed a device to keep himself informed of achievement goal progress other principals relied on report cards, observations, and direct communication with those in the school.

Intuition of the principal may have also been a factor in allowing the principal to know what was going on in the school but more importance might be attached to the fact that the principals felt it was important to be available and visible in the school. The principals made a point of getting out of the office and into the school classrooms and hallways. This allowed the principal to know what was happening on a daily basis and to observe first hand the everyday work toward goal achievement and to be sure that attention was focused. Being in the hallways and classrooms also provided principals with an opportunity to get to know the students by talking to them. Students were a major source of information for these principals. Three out of the four principals taught a class in addition to carrying out the principalship duties, and one principal felt that this was essential.

Another method used to gain information regarding the workings of the school was to visit classrooms. Both formal and informal visits occurred. The informal visits were to contact a teacher about an immediate concern while the formal visits were related to the teacher's performance review.

Information was also solicited from the parents on their feelings regarding the workings of the school. This was done on an individual basis and through informal and formal gatherings of parents.

By knowing what was happening in the school, the principal was able to lead the decisions made regarding the continuation or change of actions so that goal achievement might be realized. Frequently this resulted in the need for the principal to reinitiate some energy into the workings of the school and to engage in what some principals

referred to as prodding. While prodding was both an individual and group activity, it was done in a manner that highlighted the school's community spirit.

The School Revolved Around A Spirit Of Community

As the leader of the school these principals felt it essential to foster a team effort in the school so that the students, the teachers, and the parents felt like they were an important part of a community. In this community, the participants had a say about the work involved and were actively involved in the work so that ownership was felt.

The principals attached a great deal of significance to the team effort of the staff. This entailed not only the working together in subject departments but the working toward the same ends as an entire staff. The principal and the staff were a cohesive unit. Sometimes this meant agreeing to disagree but this was acceptable. The team effort meant that certain parts of the work were delegated which only served to add to the commitment of the participants and increased the community feeling. However, the support and counsel of the administrator was readily available for those engaged in the delegated work.

Communication among the actors involved in the school setting was of importance. Communication between and among the principal, teachers, students and parents took place on a frequent basis. Sometimes the communication was on a one to one basis and sometimes groups were involved. Formal and informal means were used depending on the situation. But communication of those involved in the school was promoted and encouraged by the principal.

A Sense Of Achievement

The sense of achievement was evident in all of the principals interviewed. They were pleased with the academic progess of the students in their schools and each quite readily pointed out the improvements that had taken place in his school since his arrival. In some cases the improvements appeared to have been phenomenal while in other cases the improvements were more subtle. However, the schools were definitely seen as better places to be.

From the comments of the principals, one might assume that the students and the teachers also felt a sense of achievement. Students were pleased that they were doing better academically, and teachers felt good about the job that they were doing.

Summary

The themes that aroses from the data were presented in this chapter. These themes were overriding common elements of the interviews. A summary of the study, its findings, personal reflections, and implications of the study will be given in chapter six.

Chapter Six

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY AND ITS FINDINGS

This chapter will briefly outline the purpose, methodology, and findings of the study. Then personal reflections of the study and implications of the study will be given.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the work that junior high school principals do to improve student learning in their schools. Specifically, the study endeavored to determine how achievement goals were chosen, how these goals were reflected in the work of the school, and what was done to enhance goal success. The principals involved in the study were also asked to give advice that other junior high school principals seeking to improve student achievement in their schools might find of value. After defining the focus, the methodology best suited to the nature of the study was decided upon.

Methodology of the Study

In an endeavor to understand the subjective work that junior high school principals do, the interpretive paradigm was used as the framework for the research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four junior high school principals. The tapes were transcribed, transcripts were returned to the principals to check for meaning and intent, and then the data were analyzed for categories and themes.

Member checks were carried out with the respondents regarding the appropriateness of the categories derived from the data.

Findings of the Study

The findings were reported in separate chapters. Categories derived from the data for each research question were reported in chapter four while the themes that emerged from the data were reported in chapter five.

Categories selected in response to the question regarding the choosing of achievement goals revolved around the principal's vision, the school needs, the principal's personal plans and the district priorities, and the ideas of the involved actors. The vision that the principal held for the school was used as a basis for choosing the achievement goals. However, a careful assessment of the needs of the school was also conducted by the principal and balanced with the vision to see what areas needed to be addressed. In this particular school district, schools must address the priorities set by the school trustees, and these formed a foundation for the achievement goals that were set for the school. Input from the teachers, parents and students was also used when selecting the school achievement goals.

Two categories arose from the data pertaining to the reflection of the achievement goals in the work of the school. These categories were working together toward the same end, and work was ongoing and consistent. Working together toward the same end entailed the implementation of the action plan, the importance of the team effort, the delegation of work, the work of the departments, and the visibility

and accessability of the principal. The category indicating that work was ongoing and consistent placed emphasis on the goal related work being an everyday occurrence, the focusing of attention, the evaluation of progress toward goal achievement, and the prodding of the principal to keep work toward goal achievement going.

The three categories derived for the question on what was done to enhance goal success were: building a positive school image, establishing and maintaining a positive school climate, and effective instruction. Community relations and the promotion of parental involvement were the main ideas pertaining to building a positive school image while appropriate student deportment and the appearance of the physical plant were thoughts expressed with regards to the school climate. Appropriate teacher placement, the importance of the master teacher, and the value of the teacher performance appraisal were the subjects mentioned relating to the effective instruction category.

It did not seem logical to report the advice that each principal would give to other junior high school principals seeking to improve student achievement in their schools under categories so this area was left as a unit of advice from each principal. The exception was the recognition of the factors associated with the unique junior high school setting.

Having reported the categories for each research question, chapter five outlined the themes that arose from the data. These themes were: the principals cared about the school, the principals knew and led what was happening in the school, the school revolved around a spirit of community, and there was a sense of achievement in the school.

Personal Reflections of the Study

As I concluded the study, I reflected on the themes in relation to my experiences and how the research questions related to previous research. These reflections resulted in the development of further insight into the work of the junior high school principal.

When comparing the themes to my experiences in education, the theme indicating that the principal genuinely cared about the school was of prime importance. My experience indicates that a principal who cares about all the happenings in the school shares this feeling with the teachers, students, and parents so that they too develop this feeling and everyone works harder to make the school a place where learning is of prime importance. It was also my experience that caring principals apply more effort toward developing an awareness of what was happening in the school. This often resulted in the reinforcement of positive happenings and taking steps to curtail negative happenings. Furthermore, in the schools where the principal gave an indication of caring, teachers were definitely more willing to follow the principal's lead. Caring, in my experience, was often accompanied by a spirit of oneness where everyone was working toward the same end and when progress was made, students, teacher, parents, and administrators felt a sense of accomplishment. As I reflected on the comparison of the study themes to my experience, my understanding of the work of the junior high school administrator and the role of the administrator in the school was enhanced.

Upon further reflection of the work of the principals in the study, it became apparent that the complexity of tasks faced by the principal were streamlined by adherence to the goals that were set. The goals provided a framework for keeping the work focused and for establishing daily priorities. Principals did not view their work as a set of complex isolated tasks but as meaningful tasks on the way to an end product. Work fragmentation was replaced by a wholeness of purpose and this purpose was related to other members of the team.

The sense of the essentialness of the "team" also became evident as I reflected on the study. Highlighting the team enhanced the common purpose of the school and therefore it was logical that a team approach was developed through all aspects of the program. Everyone was part of the team and most wanted to be viable members who put forth a personal effort toward the achievement of school effectiveness. But it was significant that the principal was a major source of energy as he led his team.

Another insight that I gained was that high expectations were held for everyone in the school and this included the principal. These expectations were verbalized and participants were expected to work toward the fulfillment of these expectations. Self-evaluations were undertaken by the principals which provided a method of monitoring self expectations. Expectations established for students, both curricular and social, were based on and recognized the stage of development that the adolescent was at. This provided for student expectations that were realistic and achievable.

The additional aspect that became apparent after reflecting on the study was the importance of the principal's vision being part of the way he was and his acceptance of that. This resulted in individual leadership styles and a feeling that what was being pursued was worthwhile. However, it was also significant that the principal's vision extended beyond the school to encompass the home. The home and school became a unit working to improve student achievement.

It seemed natural to reflect on how the research questions related to previous research. Rutherford (1985), Kroeze (1984), and Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) indicated the importance of setting goals but do not discuss how the goals were translated into the workings of the school. However, Rutherford (1985) noted, as did I, that effective principals translated their vision into goals. Agreement was also noted between my thesis and the work of Murphy (1987) on the influence of the district expectations on the work of the principal. The principals in my study knew that the district priorities had to be addressed in the school goals. There was also a positive link between my work and that of Dwyer (1986a, 1986b). Dwyer, using case studies, endeavored to show a relationship between the behavior of the principal and the target that the behavior was intended to influence. Evidence of the behaviors and the behavior targets, as listed by Dwyer (1986a, 1986b) can be seen in my work. Thus, as I reflected, it became evident that there was a relationship between past research and my work.

By reflecting on the study and comparing the study to my experiences and to past research, I developed further insight into the

work of the junior high school administrator and the administrator's relationship to some of the other happenings in the school.

Implications of the Study

As a result of the study, the following implications were developed:

1. Junior high school principals should not underestimate the influence they have on the workings of the school. Careful planning coupled with a desire to improve the school can produce results. Caring about the workings of the school and finding ways to keep informed about what is happening in the school provide the principal with a firm basis for leadership.

2. While the principal may be influential in the school a complete and total team effort may produce the best results. This means that teachers, students, and parents feel that they are valuable and contributing members of the team.

3. Leadership from the school district has the potential to impact the leadership given by the principal. When this is combined with the principal's vision, and input from teachers and the community, the potential for goal selection which will lead to improved student learning is increased.

4. Goals for improving student achievement can provide a focus for the work of the principal and the school. Ways must be devised to enhance

goal achievement and then the goals must direct the work of the school on an ongoing and consistent basis.

5. Goal achievement is very rewarding and thus the small gains may provide the incentive needed to make greater gain.

Schools can help students to learn to the maximum of their ability, and principals can influence the happenings in the school. The principals involved in this research used their own visions for the school, the district priorities, and concerns of teachers and parents to establish achievement goals that were reflected in the workings of the school as a consistent, ongoing, team effort.

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APPENDIX A

Sample Pages of Raw Data

SAMPLE PAGES OF RAW DATA

I. What was your vision for this school when you started here?
4.0
R. I wanted to move on a number of fronts in terms of this school. Certainly the academic growth was probably the most important to me. So many times, it seems to me, we categorized a school based on its clientele. We often settle for 'this is the best we can do', and we can't do any more. It seems to me that is really a myth, because I do believe that young people, the students that we work with will respond to the kinds of expectations that we set for them.

I. I think that you have shown that in the last few years.
4.1
R. Yes, that's right. It seemed to me that in working to improve the academic achievement of the school as a whole, that we would want to take a look at what kinds of expectations we have of our students - are they realistic, are they ones that are set in traditional mythology or are they ones that we should be changing. I concluded that they were expectations that we should be changing, that we should be setting higher expectations. We should be indicating to our students that in fact they can do better. You can always do better. To do better means certain things to each individual student.
4.2
One of the things that we have been working on now, not uniformly across the school, but where people are ready to move, has been the involvement of students with their classroom teachers in setting their own kinds of expectations and then looking at those from report card to report card with the teacher in terms of having really achieved what they thought they could and could they have achieved more. We even involve the students to a certain degree in their own personal assessment. So they might say I had hoped that for this portion of my mark I would get 60%.

I. So they are setting goals for themselves?
4.3
R. Yes. That's true. Yes. That is one of the things that we have been moving on as well. We have a long way to go on that. Other things that we are doing, is looking at trying to work from a team base more at a particular grade level, rather than teachers in isolation. So when I came here three years ago, one of the first things I did was to identify people who would be responsible for bringing these groups of teachers together to discuss common concerns, common issues with respect to the curriculum, with respect to instruction, with respect to student behaviour and attitude at a particular grade. We have moved quite a long way on that.

I. Would that be subject teams?

4.4
R. That has, up to this point, been subject oriented. The next step in the plan will be implemented this fall. I'll still retain the subject and instruction curriculum emphasis through one team setting, and I am building a second team setting which will be headed up by a grade coordinator-counsellor - a dual role. These individuals will have a half time assignment to carry that task out. Now we are - I don't know if this is good or bad, we'll find that out as we go along - stating that the task of these people, one at each grade level, will be to look specifically at and work with teachers and students in terms of attitude, socialization, transition into grade 7, from elementary school, and of course at the grade 9 level their transition into senior high. So we'll have some very specific responsibilities in a different area as opposed to the actual instruction and curriculum.

I. Will these people be trained counsellors?
4.5
R. One is a trained counselor but the other two are not. They are people who have expressed a considerable interest in the area. I went through a process, just within my own staff of 37 teachers, to make sure that there would be ownership for it and that people would feel that this was something that as a staff they wanted to do. I indicated to begin with that I was not going outside. I wanted to draw from the pool that we had here, and I think that is going to pay off a lot more than bringing in an outsider.

I. There will be certain advantages in that they will know the students and the teachers?
4.6
R. That's right. The long range plan of that would be, for example, the individual assigned to that kind of task for grade seven will remain with those students all the way through their junior high curriculum.

I. Oh is that right?
4.7
R. So they will move along into grade eight and into grade nine, and those number of years down the line, they will be back to grade seven again.

I. So they will really get to know a smaller portion of the students then?
4.8
R. Precisely. And the students should really get to know them as individuals whom they can talk to about many different kind of things.

I. Will this involve the home?
4.9
R. This will definitely involve the home as well. These individuals will be the first home contact people on staff. I don't want to negate my own presence here but I think that where people can identify an individual and become very knowledgable about the kind of job they have

to do, and also that staff member having that kind of knowledge about the family and the students should pay off an awful lot in the long run for us.

I. And it is unrealistic to expect one person to know so many students as well as...

4.10

R. It is impossible, when we are looking at about 700 students in our school. Although we have a full time counsellor, it is an impossible task for that counsellor to do that job effectively for every one.

I. How does this differ from what you had hoped to accomplish when you first came to this school?

4.11

R. This actually was part of a long range plan that I had thought out in my mind - not all the details by any means, nor all the means of implementing it. This was part of a plan that I wanted to see implemented over a period of time, realizing that being new to a school and to effectively make changes, one has to work with the people and bring them along with you. One must recognize that people are not all at the same place at any point in time. In my first year I moved much more rapidly than I have in the past two and I think that the results that I am getting now are far greater and will be more beneficial in the long run.

I. Was improving achievement in the school one of the major things you set out to do?

4.12

R. That is right. The achievement and to look at improved student deportment. The kind of contact that you would have with children in our school now compared with three years ago is significantly different in terms of the way they respond to people, to visitors and so on. So I think we made some very good gains there.

APPENDIX B

Categorical Responses To Research Questions

CATEGORICAL RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1. How were achievement goals chosen?

a) The vision that the principal held for the school was used as a basis for choosing the achievement goals.

b) School needs were carefully considered when selecting school achievement goals.

c) The personal plan of the principal and the school district priorities provided the foundation for the school achievement goals.

d) Input was solicited from the actors involved in the school when selecting the school achievement goals.

QUESTION 2. How were achievement goals reflected in the work of the school?

a) Working together toward the same end
   - implementation of the action plan
   - the importance of the team effort, the delegation of work, and the work of the departments
   - the principal was visible and accessable

b) Work was ongoing and consistent
   - an everyday occurance
   - focused attention
   - evaluation of progress toward goals as you go
   - the prodding of the principal

QUESTION 3. What was done to enhance goal success?

a) Building a positive school image
   - community relation work
   - parental involvement

b) Establishing and maintaining a positive school climate
   - appropriate student deportment
   - appearance of the physical plant

c) Effective instruction
   - appropriate teacher placement
   - importance of the master teacher
   - teacher performance appraisal

QUESTION 4. What advice would principals give to others seeking to improve student achievement levels in their own junior high schools?

a) The specific advice from each principal

b) Recognition of the factors associated with the unique junior high school setting